

**The negotiation of belonging: An exploration of the roles of kinship and the state among elderly West Indian migrants residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton, London.**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is concerned with the contemporary experiences of long-term West Indian migrants to Britain, residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton. It assesses their multi-layered negotiation of belonging, connections with the West Indies, their family and the British nation state amid the issues of race and social exclusion.

The elderly people in this research migrated to improve their economic and social status. However, due to combined factors, such as estrangement from home and fragmented familial structures that do not fully support them, they maintained their original working-class status. They rely on state services but tensions in service provision test their inclusion. The housing scheme aims to create a community where the elderly people can associate with each other, bond, locate and root in the scheme and in the external local community. However, factions and divisions arise affecting their belonging. In addition, gender differentiation became apparent as my male informants are less connected to their family.

Overall, my elderly informants remained culturally aligned to their sense of remaining West Indian despite the multiplicity of 'disjunctures' (Appadurai 1996, Besson 2005) they encounter amid shifting and fluid boundaries. Indeed, many travel to and from the West Indies. However, as the unsuccessful returnees show they cannot permanently settle due to kinship estrangement, insufficient finance and reliance on the British state. Therefore, I suggest, they stayed in England by default, becoming 'marginal within places'. Utilising Gramsci's (1990) approach to social change I assess my informants' agency and the agency of others on their behalf as the migrants strive to maintain their identity, culture and place within complex contemporary society. Bhabha's (1994) concepts of 'hybridity' and the 'third space' contribute to my analysis, highlighting the contradictory and confusing issues associated with the migrants' culture of movement, challenging the notions of settlement, inclusion and belonging.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis is first and foremost born out of my relationship with my parents, now deceased, who as migrants told me stories of 'back home' with both fondness and honesty, fuelling my interest regarding this research. I appreciate the following help, in no particular order, for I am equally grateful for their support and co-operation.

I thank all my informants, the elders, their family members, friends and associates as well as the professional workers who allowed me into their professional and private world. I thank my two supervisors, Dr. Jean Besson and Dr. Nici Nelson and Professor Pat Caplan who have supported me. I also appreciate the support from my friends and fellow students on the course.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This thesis is entitled, 'The negotiation of belonging: An exploration of the roles of kinship and the state among elderly West Indian migrants residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton, London'. I explore two related questions that are central to the thesis. The first question asks, how does the trans-national dispersal of the migrants' families affect them? The second asks how is the migrants' sense of belonging influenced and negotiated as a consequence of their interface with the state? In this introduction to the main body of the thesis I provide background information to contextualise the research. I indicate why I have chosen this topic and, through the notion of ethics and reflexivity, I express my own position. I endeavour to bring the reader into the field by providing a description of the ethnographic field location and a brief introduction to the elderly residents of the sheltered housing scheme where I undertook my research. I also highlight pertinent reflections on the research methods used.

The first of the two questions responds to my informants' connections to their family, uncovering the effect familial dispersal resulting from migration has on their settlement. This is a scenario that underpins the issues they encounter as elderly vulnerable people with a dispersed familial network and association differentiated by gender. It therefore serves to provide background to their spatially fragmented family structure that emerged in the West Indies,<sup>1</sup> where they originate, that predisposes my informants to loss of kin ties. My elderly informants also engage in a mixture of trans-national travel, return trips to the West Indies, as well as severing ties with 'back home'. So it is these different responses to the West Indies and the link between migration and the kinship structure that contribute to the contemporary complex interrelationships regarding belonging.

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the term 'West Indies' generally to describe the region my informants came from. I also use the term 'Caribbean' and 'Afro-Caribbean' in the thesis when quoting scholars and others who use this term.

My second question relates to my informants' links with the state. They are working-class. As a result of their economic position they have forged an inextricable bond with the state due to their need for a place to live and to access health care services to facilitate their well-being. I suggest this arises from their kin association producing insufficient help creating a gap that is filled by the state. Thereby, their interplay with the state, local community and each other also helps to determine how they negotiate their placement and sense of belonging.

This research is unique because a focus on West Indian elders in such a scheme has never been undertaken before. So my assessment, framework and research findings will contribute to anthropological knowledge about this group of working-class West Indian migrants, predominantly from Jamaica. In addition, it adds both to knowledge on ageing and on narratives such as that undertaken by Chamberlain (1995, 2001, 2006) and Gardener (2002).

### *The context of the research*

This thesis draws together the link with family and the state as the contributing elements affecting my informants' sense of self, their ethnic age group affiliation, membership of community associations and overall sense of belonging as elderly people in British society. The desire to return to the West Indies is connected to their desire to fulfil their dream to return home, since this was the main purpose of their migration. However, returning home remains problematic. This is because they do not have sufficient finances to do so, their kin ties have weakened and their well-being and housing needs are met by the state in England and they have become part of British society.

Therefore, I found that my informants' placement, as a result of migration and their connection with the state, created a paradoxical and multifaceted sense of belonging that resulted in inter-related components shaping the context of my research. Thus my focus considers two nation states regarding my elderly informants' sense of belonging. The first focus involves looking at the residency

of my informants at the sheltered housing scheme that set out to mitigate social isolation and to foster a community among the inhabitants, as well as to provide housing and support services for those more economically and socially marginalised. Indeed this particular service provision resulted from the state recognising the unmet needs of some elderly Afro-Caribbean people. The policies governing the scheme contain prerequisites to enable elderly people who may become isolated to feel a sense of belonging to both the community at the scheme as well as the external local community. My informants challenged these operational policies by their differing views on elderliness and behaviour that threatened the smooth running of the scheme. Their social experience in this context highlights their status as black elders and West Indian migrants. Indeed, my informants had differing views concerning belonging to a group termed elderly, to the community within the sheltered housing scheme and the local community in which it is situated.

The second focus relates to a sense of belonging that forms through kin ties. However, this became difficult to achieve because the culture of movement made for dispersal and loss of kin ties. Consequently, an attachment to a place through kinship ties proved difficult to maintain. During their life course they therefore pass through a process of losing strong ties to family and family land 'back home', even though some as elders, had made unsuccessful attempts at return migration. Therefore, I consider belonging through assessing their relationship to Britain and to the West Indies, particularly as some were simultaneously trying to negotiate placement within the two nation states.

There are also two interlocking influences underpinning a sense of belonging, namely class and gender. As working-class people they migrated to move out of their impoverishment. However, the majority remained working class and thus became reliant on state services and this eventually hindered their return home. In addition, their kinship structure determined by their working-class position presented gender differences that I explored. This led to the discovery that men were more likely to be separated from kin and have weaker ties and sources of support facilitating their dependency on the state. Whilst the elderly

women have stronger ties with their children, nevertheless, they too have a strong dependency on the state. Therefore, as a result of the spatial separations of kin through migration they developed an individualised sense of self.

I compiled genealogy charts that also bring out the existence of differing familial connections along gendered lines as well as providing a social map of the location of my informants' family members. The charts provide background information enabling an understanding of their kinship formation that I found led to relatively narrow kin ties, situating my informants in a somewhat isolated position in relation to their families. I also found that these patterns have become entrenched in my informants' associations with kin, as similarities existed between their formative kin ties and the ones they made as adults with their own children and wider families. Therefore my elderly informants live in households alone without family members and I suggest this also affects their sense of belonging.

In this thesis I utilised an eclectic framework to interpret these connected aspects of my data and to bring out the salient points from which my themes emerge. In addition I recognise that globalisation and social change have had an impact on the researcher, the topic under investigation and the location of the research. Indeed my research takes place within the context of a complex urban environment populated by many migrants, who like my informants moved to improve their economic status. Therefore, in this thesis I draw on the theories that discuss how globalisation affects social processes and individuals (Marcus 1999) from structural, phenomenological, post modern and critical theory perspectives, in this anthropological research.

I focus on the personal agency of my elderly informants and the agency of workers acting on their behalf as a powerful and central part of the processes determining their belonging. I draw on Gramsci's (1990) theory of social transformations to aid my thematic assertions concerning how my informants negotiate their belonging. Bhabha's (1994) notions of 'hybridity' and the 'third

space' also help me to develop my informants' position. I show where his notions apply and where they do not, ultimately suggesting that my elderly informants, assisted by others, push boundaries to find 'their' particular place in society.

This thesis therefore provides further anthropological insight into the flux and confusions identified by anthropologists such as Hannerz (1992) and Papastergaidis (2000) among migratory people. The thesis provides an examination of the processes involved for the elderly people in my research as they face challenges regarding their roots and that affects belonging. My examination of how they experience and manage their day to day life events enables a focus on the influences that affect how and why they negotiate their sense of belonging.

Indeed, the development of the specialised sheltered housing scheme arose out of West Indian migrants' subordinate and impoverished position in British society. In the mid 1980s there was acknowledgement of the effects of racial discrimination and the barrier it caused concerning equal access to services. The late Lord Scarman's enquiry (1981) concerning the social unrest and rioting in the early 1980s, highlighted issues of poverty and lack of appropriate service provision for the vulnerable black elderly population in Brixton. This contributed to the release of funding to develop services. Often funding was provided for projects within the voluntary sector through the distribution of grant aid. The voluntary sector included many projects that were created and run by black people to provide a service to their community. It was within this environment that this particular scheme was launched. Two prominent community leaders at that time were the late Mr. Laws and his wife who managed a drop-in centre and luncheon club. They also developed the sheltered housing accommodation where I undertook my research, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Housing Trust (MHT). The community centre and luncheon club closed years ago. Last year the premises became occupied, providing a service to people with mental health issues. The sheltered housing scheme has therefore been run solely by MHT for ten years.

The elderly inhabitants at the scheme are defined by their racial and cultural identity, namely black Afro-Caribbean<sup>2</sup> as well as their age. This ethnic group therefore generates codes and patterns of specific behaviour associated with being West Indian. However, their expected behaviour is determined by the norms pertaining to the dominant culture, in which they live. This culture is an urban one that is influenced by the wider multicultural mix of London. Nevertheless, within the scheme and locally in Brixton there is great emphasis on the West Indian culture. This eclectic cultural fusion interfaces with the ethos of the scheme and with the associated service provisions that are also governed by specific professional regulations. It is in this mix that important dynamics are at play. I therefore delved into the dynamics to understand how the elders engage with the scheme provisions and the regulations that have a powerful governing affect on their 'fitting into' the community, that ultimately contributes to shaping their belonging.

The sheltered housing scheme supplied by the state provides the location for this anthropological qualitative research focus, within which I undertake a micro-analysis. Sheltered housing accommodation is the term used to describe accommodation specifically designed to cater for elderly people in need of support, so I describe the physical building that is designed to facilitate easy access, with many features to help those disabled. This scheme comprises two large buildings that contain individual flats. Communal facilities are also provided to encourage the residents to socialise with each other such as a lounge, laundry, kitchen and garden, and there are planned group meetings and events. In addition, a guest room is attached to each building that can be used by the elders' visitors to support contact with friends and family.

In order to provide assistance to the elderly people there are workers who reside on site at the scheme. These workers are the Scheme Managers who play an enabling role by ensuring that the elders apply for services they need. Given that the scheme is a provision for elderly people with housing and

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<sup>2</sup> Although I have used the term West Indian to describe my informants' cultural heritage, in this context I use the term Afro-Caribbean because this is used in the policies that govern the scheme and also used to define my informants' cultural heritage and ethnicity.

support needs, it follows that the subjects of my research are in this category. The Scheme Managers are also black and of West Indian origin or parentage. This cultural and racial similarity is a specific requirement of the Scheme Manager position in order to attend to the specific needs of the Afro-Caribbean client group, complying with Section 5.2 (d) of the Race Relations Act 1976<sup>3</sup>. I found that they too add their personal agency in both delivering services and in commenting on the policies and practices, through acting as advocates for the elders. I investigated how the elderly black people engage with the service's ethnic and cultural specificity and examined how this engagement affected their sense of belonging.

Although my informants left the West Indies over forty years ago, they retain a West Indian familial form, and the literature available concerning Caribbean families provides appropriate concepts that remain pertinent to understanding their kinship ties. However, their emotional attachment has been challenged, because they cannot and do not return home, but occupy what I call a space, 'marginal within places', a phrase that I developed to describe the place they occupy regarding belonging. Some of my informants have travelled 'back home' or abroad elsewhere to visit family members and some have attempted return migration to Jamaica, but their permanent residency remains in Brixton, South West London.

### *Locating the research*

London is separated into two main areas, inner London and the surrounding area referred to as Greater London. The London borough councils are responsible for governing the densely populated urban areas at the local level. However, in London, they maintain partial responsibility because some areas of governance have been passed to joint bodies in order to improve co-ordination, such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) led by the Mayor of London (Local Government Association, Local Government Structure, 2004). Indeed, generally, local governance operates under national guidelines. The

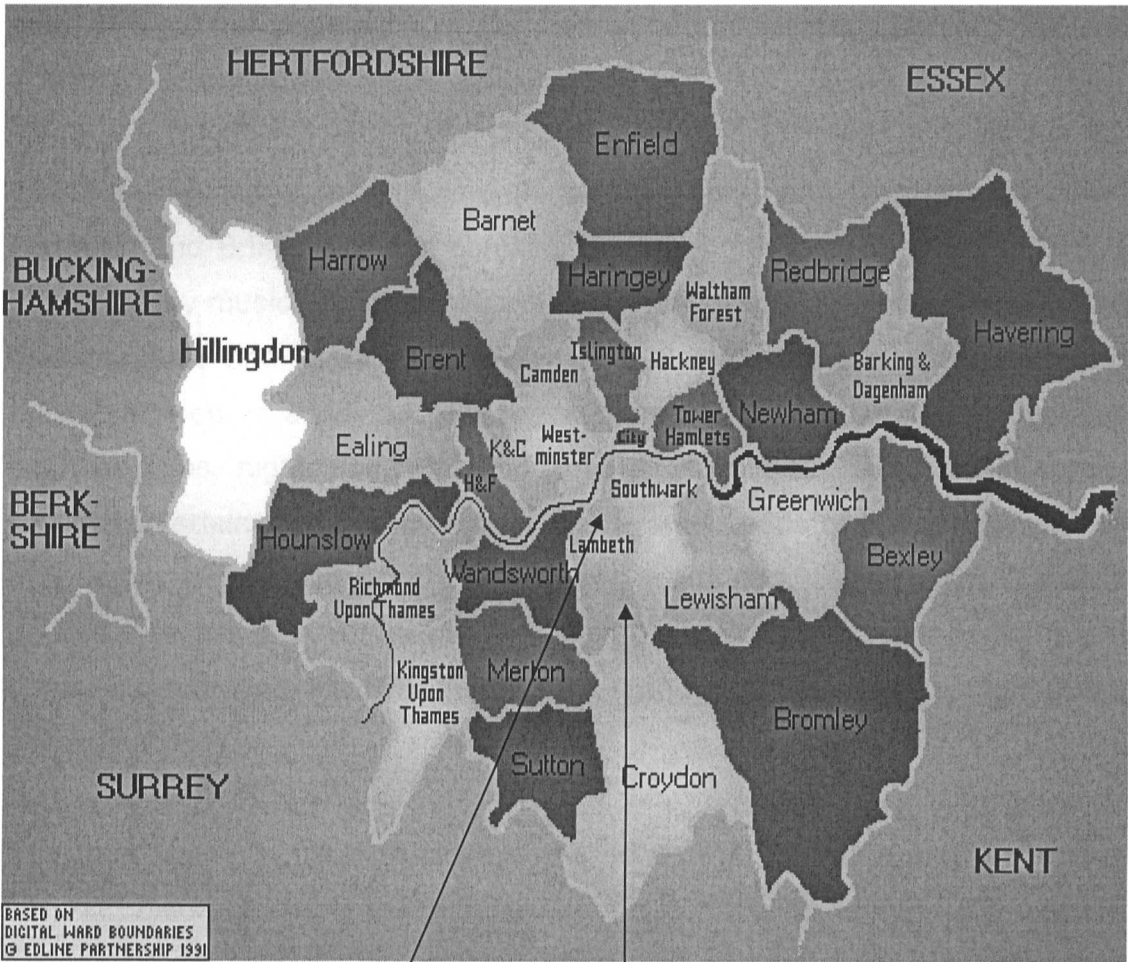
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<sup>3</sup> The Race Relations Act of 1976 received further amendments in 1995 and 2000.

administrative area of Greater London contains thirty-two London boroughs. Twelve of these, plus the City of London, constitute Inner London, while the others constitute Outer London (Wikipedia 2007).

See Figure 1 for a map of the London boroughs and the location of Lambeth (London Borough of Lambeth/About Lambeth 2004). Lambeth, the second largest populated borough in Inner London borough, is seven miles long and two and a half miles wide. The River Thames provides the border at the north of the borough where the London Eye and Waterloo station are situated. The South Bank complex is located in the riverbank area with its expanding arts and leisure industry, with theatres such as the Young Vic, the National Theatre, the Royal Festival Hall, and the National Film Theatre. The central part of the borough is home to the Oval cricket ground. In addition, Clapham Common and Brockwell Park host events such as circus fairs.





**Figure 1** Map of London boroughs

Brixton

Lambeth

Source: London Borough of Hillingdon

*The Inner London boroughs are:*

*Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, Westminster.*

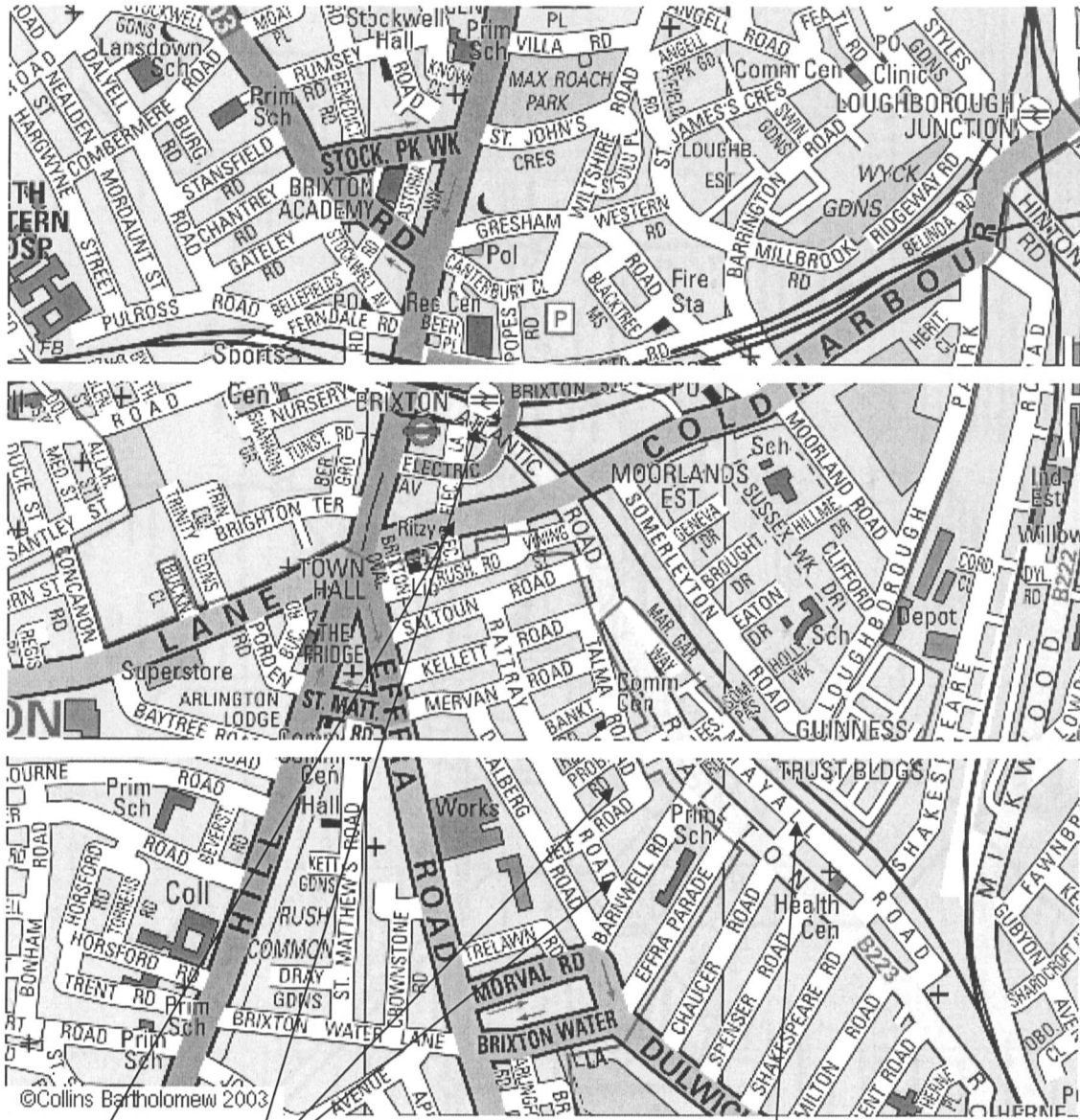
Lambeth has a population of approximately 260,000 of which 34% are from ethnic minorities. The predominant language is English with Yoruba and Portuguese being the second and third widely used of the 132 languages spoken in the borough. At present black people from the Caribbean form just

over 10% of the population of Lambeth (London Statistics online – Census 2001:1).

There are five areas within Lambeth, namely Streatham, Clapham, Stockwell, Norwood and Brixton. Brixton contains the borough's largest shopping centre, the Academy music venue, the Ritzy cinema and many of the council's housing developments and the borough Town Hall that houses the administration of public services. In addition, there are numerous churches and social facilities, such as pubs, nightclubs, wine bars and a Sushi bar. These social venues provide entertainment that caters for the diverse needs of the eclectic cultural mix drawn locally and from more widely in London. In addition, Lambeth council provides nine libraries to the community, including a mobile home visit library service, and the Brixton archives (London Borough of Lambeth/About Lambeth 2004).

The tube station is situated close to the scheme in the surrounding streets in central Brixton providing the underground rail connection. Nearby, the overland railway station provides the additional local and national travel link. See Figure 2 for a map of the local area and the location of the scheme. Figure 3 shows the interconnecting transport links by tube train within London.

The negotiation of belonging: An exploration of the roles of kinship and the state among elderly West Indian migrants residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton, London.



The centre of Brixton market area  
Sheltered housing scheme

The Luncheon Club

Windrush Sq.  
Open space area

Source: London Tube Map

**Figure 2** Map of the local Brixton area where the scheme is situated

The negotiation of belonging: An exploration of the roles of kinship and the state among elderly West Indian migrants residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton, London.

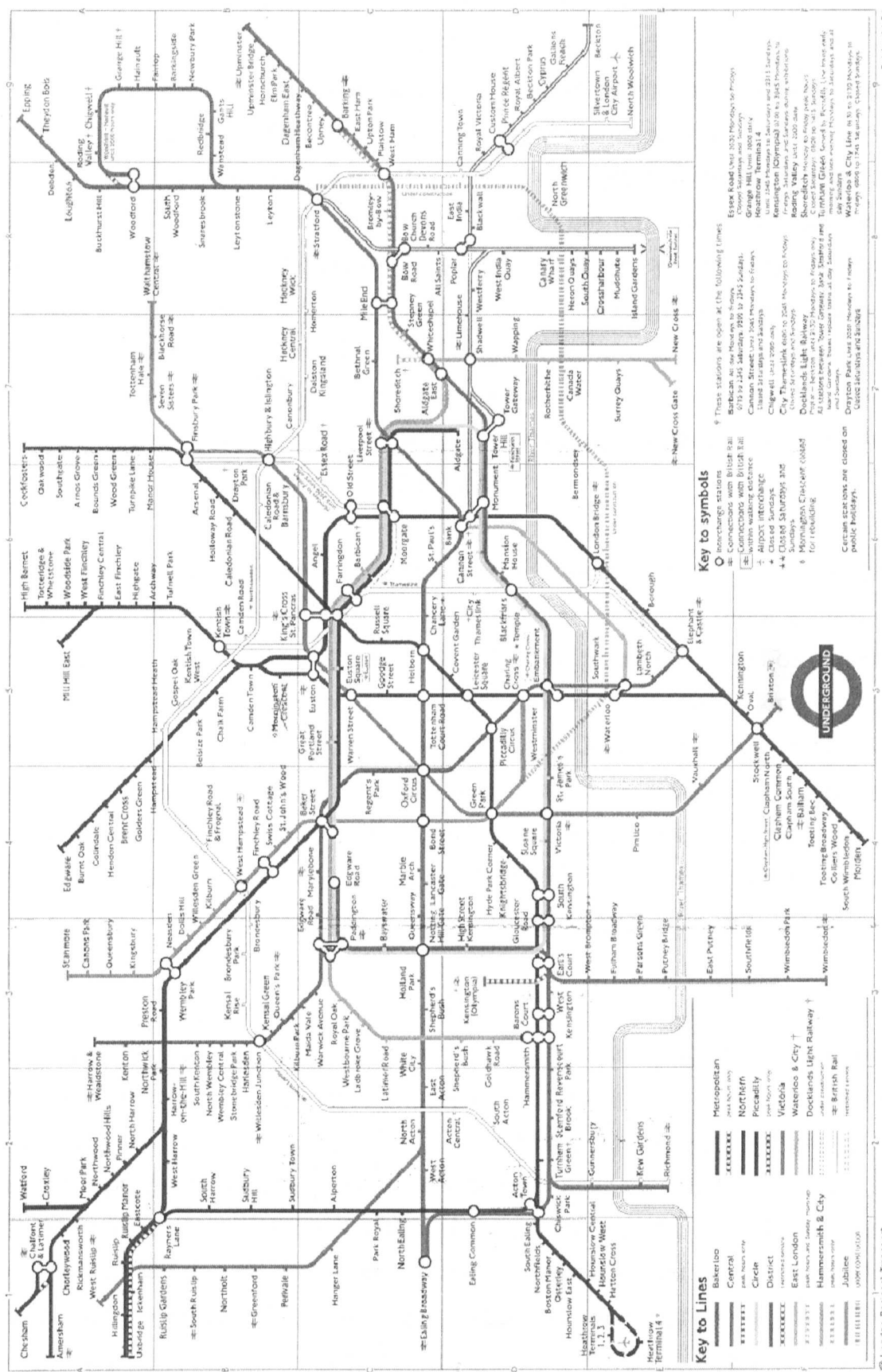


Figure 3 Map of Brixton Tube Connections Source: London Underground Map

A green space in the town centre is named 'Windrush Square', in memory of the SS Windrush that docked in 1948 at Tilbury bringing West Indians to London, some of whom settled and became part of the early West Indian community in Brixton. The Sheltered Housing Scheme is situated within this vicinity, in two low-rise buildings, integrated into the community. So they look like two desirable complexes containing flats that are not obviously associated with the elderly looking in from the outside. There are no obvious alarming features in these roads where the scheme is found. Yet, beneath the surface there is a murky side to the locality because a lot of crime, specifically drug trafficking, takes place, and sometimes people are stabbed or shot in street incidents. The elderly people at the centre of my research live close to the centre of Brixton amid these social difficulties.

In the area there are many buildings of mixed tenure, some provided by the government and others acquired through private purchase. There is also a government-managed play centre for young children and teenagers on Railton Road not far from the location where the Brixton Community Senior Citizens' Day Centre and Luncheon Club used to be. Further along the road is a Methodist church where one of my research subjects is a member as well as the Temple of Truth Church where another informant attends. Moving along Railton Road there are restaurants and cafes and a food take away shop that is also a gambling club where another research subject frequents.

A few streets away there is a large street market with a mixture of commodities on sale with stalls selling fruits and vegetables, fish and poultry. Shoe shops, clothes, bedding, lingerie, hair and beauty products, fabrics, wholesale shops and shops selling a variety of pots, pans, and goods for the home are visible. A variety of people from different ethnic backgrounds can be seen shopping here. The air is filled with a mixture of smells and a variety of colour can be seen from the goods on display from places within Europe, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, alongside these are other delicacies from worldwide. From the 1940s and 1950s many immigrants from the West Indies settled in Brixton, many initially staying in temporary lodging houses in a large underground

bunker at Stockwell, also renting, leasing and purchasing accommodation that has since been demolished. However, social relations were not always peaceful and tensions exploded in the two infamous riots in the 1980s, which highlighted severe issues of poverty. Thereafter, investigations into the causes and wider social issues experienced in the community exposed the plight of the West Indian elderly living in poor conditions experiencing discrimination. Subsequent discussions uncovered issues regarding exclusion and inclusion, focusing on remedies to minimise discrimination whilst advocating equality of opportunity for the local ethnic population. In response to pressing social concerns, including law and order, the government embarked on a long-term plan of social redevelopment. Many old houses and streets have therefore been transformed through refurbishment or replaced by the erection of modern properties creating higher density. Newer migrants have entered adding further to ethnic diversity and issues regarding social integration. So the sheltered housing scheme is located in a diverse and fast changing multi-cultural community.

The locality, once held in high esteem, became infamous for poverty and deprivation and although developed is still plagued by social inequalities and the associated social problems commonly found in many urban environments. Brixton like many inner city localities has been aligned with poverty, high crime, and unemployment, and is often high on the league tables for poor education achievement, housing, recreation and social welfare provisions.

According to the Lambeth Community Strategy (2004:14), 'Brixton is a young place with one in five residents under the age of 16'. Further,

'Brixton has significant deprivation in all its wards...there is a high number of overcrowded council homes in Tulse Hill and Ferndale, Brixton has the highest number of unemployed single-parent families in Brixton Hill, Coldharbour and Tulse Hill...fear of crime is the area's biggest problem. Street crime around Brixton tube and railway station is the highest of any transport interchange in Lambeth and nearly half the drug offences in the borough are committed in

Brixton. This in turn encourages related crime such as robbery, vehicle crime, burglary and prostitution.'

Indeed my informants as West Indian elders are sometimes victims of crime and vulnerable in the community particularly as they represent a minority of the population as elderly people. Nevertheless, there have been great improvements to the quality of life for many inhabitants, even those who experienced very difficult times in the past.

There are also health inequalities in Lambeth with the highest rates across the borough for deaths occurring in men under 75 from heart disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke which are all above both the national and London average. There are also high rates for suicide, malaria and tuberculosis. Life expectancy is 73 for men and 80 for women.

In relation to the elderly population of Lambeth they are constituted as shown in the table below which shows that the elderly constitute 15.8% of Brixton's population. (The figures start at age 55 to reflect the age of early retirement.)

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage of the population in Brixton</b>
55-59	3.3
60-64	3.2
65-69	2.7
70-74	2.4
75-84	3.2
85+	1

**Figure 4** Lambeth's Elderly Population Source: Lambeth Statistics  
Census 2001

This reflects the small size of the elderly population in Brixton and my informants, as West Indian elders, constitute a small segment of this group.

Brixton is therefore predominantly a young place and an area in which my informants have a minority presence.

### *The research group*

There were various people involved in my research group. My informants comprised 26 elderly West Indian residents, aged between 60 and 86 predominantly of Jamaican origin, residing at the sheltered housing scheme. Also included were two Scheme Managers, the Area Manager, a Social Worker, Housing Officers and Carers, the Handyman and Cleaner at the scheme, as they provide direct front line assistance to the elders. In addition, I included the manager at the agency overseeing the Carers. I also interviewed the manager at the Brokerage department in Lambeth's Social Services that administers the commissioning of the Carers service, plus the workers within the housing directorate at Lambeth who administer the Supporting People contract and commission MHT to provide the supported housing staff. In respect of the wider associations, Church Pastors, Day Centre Managers, and other people from the local community whom my residents encountered socially were included. I also interviewed some family members and visitors to the scheme. I also utilised information from people in the cafes and public spaces that I visited with my informants. I undertook participant observation amongst them, and both held and heard conversations.

### *Why I chose this subject*

I have a longstanding professional working involvement with the social welfare field and wanted to conduct research within this realm. I have seen many conflicts where ethnicity and cultural differences clash with the state's professional administration of services. The discomfort and ambiguity involved in the relocation of migrants and the generational differences between family members in their process of resettlement and integration are apparent in my area of work. I am also a first generation daughter of migrants from Jamaica, in the West Indies, and I have an added interest in undertaking research about



this migrant population. This interest derives from my personal experience of living in 'two worlds', as I recognise there are differences in the social and cultural expectations that derive from my West Indian heritage and from my British experience. The fusion of these two influences, as a lived experience, is both challenging and interesting.

In addition, I have worked in Brixton and other deprived areas in London as a professional state employee so I therefore have first hand experience of how government strategy, policy and administration interface with people. I have experience of the difficulties that arise in the community in terms of hearing migrants' airing difficulties regarding understanding government policies that affect them. I witnessed their reactions to feeling that their voices were unheard and their needs left unmet. I worked for Lambeth Housing Department in the mid 1980s after the Brixton riots and I found that a lot of the West Indian population were living in unsatisfactory accommodation, under unsatisfactory circumstances, and most strikingly they were misunderstood when explaining their plight particularly the older people. They were at the mercy of the state to help but even that was difficult to penetrate. This was in the early days of equal opportunities policies and the implementation of Section 5.2 (d)<sup>4</sup>, where specific posts were created to provide a service to the Afro-Caribbean black community. Black workers were employed to work with the local black community to highlight the plight of its members and provide a service sensitive to specific needs. They also advised the council on how to develop services to meet their clients' needs.

At this time, there were many lobby groups that met within the borough and in the Town Hall. The Black Workers' Group provided a voice in local government that attempted to push up to the higher tiers of management and policy makers the issues encountered by residents of the borough. I attended many meetings and discussion groups on this very topical issue. They resulted in the

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<sup>4</sup> Section 5.2(d) is a part of the Race Relations Act 1976, amended 2000 and 2003 that enabled employers to employ a black worker because it is vital to do so. This occurred as long as it was proven that the client group are be best served by workers reflecting their culture and race.

development of new services and policies. So, I was interested to find out what had happened to the developments achieved and a focus on this elderly group would enable me to find out, particularly as the service model at the sheltered housing scheme reflected the developments made under the application of the Section 5.2(d) principle.

### *Positionality and ethics*

Prior to entering the field I sought permission from the Area Manager, Scheme Managers and residents to undertake research at the scheme. Thereafter, I undertook fieldwork by commuting from my home in the neighbouring borough of Croydon, approximately five miles from Brixton. I therefore live in the same city as my field location that is consequently familiar to me.

As Marcus (1999) points out there is an increasing trend to study the familiar rather than the unfamiliar and this challenges the traditional boundaries of location, fieldwork dilemmas, obstacles, topics and the ethnographer's gaze. Consequently, my thoughts concerning undertaking research amongst people with a similar heritage to my own brought concerns regarding my ability to remain objective and to fit in. Myerhoff (1989), a Jewish woman, undertook research among elderly Jews at a Senior Citizens' Centre in Venice Beach, California, examining ethnicity and ageing and raised concerns about objectivity and identification. She states,

'the anthropologist engages in peculiar work ... tied to a different culture to the point of finding it to be intelligible, regardless of how strange it seems in comparison to one's own background. This is accomplished to experience the new culture from within, living within it for a time as a member, all of the while maintaining sufficient detachment to observe and analyse it with some objectivity. This peculiar posture – being inside and outside at the same time – is called participant observation. This assumption of the natives' viewpoint, so to speak, is a means of knowing others through oneself, a professional technique that can be mastered fairly easily in the study of very different

peoples. Working with one's own society and more specifically, those of one's own familiar heritage, is perilous, and much more difficult. Identifying with the 'Other' – Indians, Chicanos, if one is Anglo, blacks if one is white, males if one is female – is an act of imagination, a means of discovering what one is not and will never be. Identifying with what one is now and will be someday is quite a different process (1989:87).

Myerhoff finally acknowledged her qualification to write her book, stating, '... my membership and my affection are my qualifications' (1989: 90). This is my position but I would add that I am also responding to a topical contemporary debate concerning issues of diversity, belonging, exclusion, incorporation, and ultimately Britishness (McGhee 2006).

Similarly, I also acknowledge my concerns regarding studying the same ethnic group as my own. For in the 'anthropological gaze' I am the researcher and this places me in the position as 'other' in relation to my subjects, so there is some familiarity, yet I was born in England, so again, I am 'the other'. In addition my age, circumstances and consequently my perspectives are different. Being located in this position proved to both hinder and aid my research. For having a lot in common with my subjects I was expected to understand much without explanation. However the anthropologist requires explanation in her field notes to decipher later. I therefore asked questions that caused a frown or a look of, 'but don't you know'? Although at times I really was unfamiliar with some of their thoughts. In truth I am both familiar and other and this is both interesting and important to acknowledge.

With regards to my own position, my identification as Afro-Caribbean, of Jamaican parentage, helped me to gain access to my informants although I had to remain at a distance to maintain objectivity and to ensure that my position did not jeopardise the validity of the research. Indeed, my position is also similar to Besson's (2002) who highlighted that her personal Caribbean background influenced her interpretation of the two histories of the Jamaican settlement of Martha Brae. Besson therefore expressed that she fell into the position of

holding, what Asad, Rosaldo and Whitaker (cited in 2002:xxiv) refer to as a 'positioned subjectivity' as a native researcher at home. Thus she departed from the outsider stance. Further, influenced by Rosaldo, Besson acknowledges that she held a distinctive mix of insight and blindness so suggests that her ethnography is provisional and incomplete. I therefore acknowledge that my ethnography will include these features.

I also acknowledge the power of my position in the field and the knowledge that I will produce from my research arising out of this emotional and intellectual exercise (Shore 1999). I therefore examined the potential social and political issues that might arise (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002). With this in mind I employed diplomacy, tact and caution in my fieldwork encounter.

I think that some of my informants had personal motives for telling me some information, for example, their fears of crime in the scheme, their views of the workers, and to share personal tragedy. They were providing me with explanations and information to effect change as well as to relieve some personal stress and tension. However their narratives were vital to me as they provided the answer to my questions. Nevertheless, I was careful not to promise them anything, and I did not advocate on their behalf.

Certainly, I practiced self-accountability which guided my moral responsibility and enabled me to form dignified relationships with my informants (Argyrou 2000). My encounters with the elderly people in the field were certainly thought provoking and I responded playing the differing roles of researcher, friend and confidant. However, I made sure that I maintained a sense of responsibility, remembering always my accountability to them as well as to my research outcomes. I believe that they felt comfortable in the encounter and understood my role. For whilst writing up and absent from the Scheme, I returned one day to visit them. They asked if the course had ended and why I had not been back to visit them. This indicated to me that they were clear about my motives for association, seemingly knowing that I went there primarily as a researcher. In

addition they sought to continue our connection and establish a more personal relationship.

I had consciously sought this recognition for I was not there to change things but to comment on them, and to take up the position as advocated by Dumont (1978:6), who quotes Mead's words: 'the self concept of many anthropologists seems to have one characteristic in common: the image of stepping in and out of society, of being involved and detached' (1978:6). Dumont pointed out that Boas, Kroeber, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard, amongst others sought to remain detached, to ensure the scientific acceptance of anthropology. I tried to adopt this stance in order to be more factual and to present an understanding of the cultural and social realities encountered. I wanted to bring my subjects forward and to ensure they were at the centre of my research. However, this objective stance contained paradoxical consequences for although I took a formal 'outsider' stance I became friendly with some elders as the research progressed. Perhaps the human condition cannot remain totally detached. I also comment on the procedures and policies encountered, thus acting on their behalf.

Furthermore, as a practitioner within the social care field it was necessary for me to consider ethical research practice. Definitely professional bodies provide guidelines regarding conduct during the research process and I drew on these, for example it is paramount for me to ensure that I do not breach confidentiality, perform or acquiesce with any form of abuse. As a worker and manager of state regulated support services I drew on the work of Bell and Nutt (2002), who discussed the issue of ethics regarding conducting research within the professional working field.

Indeed, Bell (Bell and Nutt 2002) highlights her specific training as a Social Worker so kept two separate identities, attempting to place a boundary around her professional social work self and her researcher self. In interviews she chose not to demonstrate empathy in order to encourage more explicit data collection. She did not reveal her personal life to them for paramount was her

duty to act responsibly as her professional training and code of conduct dictated. This stance was maintained to mitigate issues about exploitation. I too adopted this stance for similar reasons, however as stated above, I was befriended.

Birch (2002) highlights two dominant frameworks of ethics originating from two traditions. First, the deontological position derived from Kantian philosophy where certain absolute rules exist and are to be kept regardless of the consequences. The other is the consequentialist position, based on the philosophy of the greatest good to the greatest number focusing on the consequences of action, a model associated with J. S. Mill and the tradition of utilitarianism. It is in this latter position, where attention is focused on the researcher, regulatory bodies, rights, duties, actions and consequences, that I place myself, considering the consequences to my research.

Here the researcher must consider his or her credibility once the research is finished because both the reputation of the profession and the rights of the subjects can be threatened (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002). At all times the subjects' rights must be protected to ensure their safety. Therefore the ethnographer must develop an internalised sense of how to protect human subjects. The codes prescribed by the American Anthropological Association (1998) and the Association of Social Anthropologists (1999) both propose that the ethnographer should respect the lives, attitudes, and opinions of the folk in their study. However, competency, informed consent, protection, confidentiality, maintaining relationships and publication must also be considered in forging a participant observation alliance.

Nevertheless, I understand, as Robbins (2003), reflecting on Bourdieu, suggests, that the reflective pursuit of ethical action does not guarantee neutrality or ethical detachment. Indeed Lewis (1983) declared his familiarity with the Mexican culture in conjunction with his own values and personality inevitably influenced the outcome of his study. I am sure that I was similarly influenced.

Overall, I am mindful of my position and abide by the regulatory codes so negotiated my entry into the field. Birch (2002) indicates that approval to conduct research is often based on the notion of protection, confidentiality, and anonymity. While ethics go further because they have theoretical and empirical implications and filter through the qualitative research process. The guidelines, rules, and principles provided by ethics committees assist in resolving tensions in the act of research when one is generating public knowledge about private life. The use of a reflexive model where the researcher enables and acknowledges personal feelings and emotions helps to facilitate a process allowing responsibility and accountability to develop as ethics is intertwined with relationships, interactions and shared values.

In my case, I gained informed consent that enabled me to maintain respect for my subjects. I spoke individually to each person, showed them my Goldsmiths' ID, informed them of my research topic, and asked if they would speak to me and give me information that I would record, write up and submit to be read by my evaluators. Those who wanted to take part selected themselves and those not interested were left out. However, there were instances in which even those who did not initially consent became involved or provided background observations. When I asked questions, if they did not want to answer, I respected their wishes. I was aware that I was under a watchful gaze as much as gazing and watching others myself.

I observed their boundaries, for example, on one occasion whilst talking to one of the elderly women about her children, I detected an omission regarding one of her children. Although she made vague comments about the incident, I did not immediately probe because I knew she was protecting herself from the painful experience. Similarly, one of my male informants indicated that he left his district because of an unfortunate involvement with a woman. Again, he would not provide details. Both these examples of omissions do take away an invaluable part of data that could provide interesting links. I could therefore only validate information to the best of my ability (Chevannes 1994) and as far as they allowed. However, they protected themselves and through my ethical

stance I colluded with protecting them, denying myself some further depth to the research.

It is acknowledged that the ethnographer must assess the risks and benefits of their research. However the risks associated in this encounter are to both the community, and I, as researcher, nevertheless the benefits are mostly to me. Risks to community are heightened when confidentiality is not maintained, when respect for sensitive topics diminishes, with inappropriate disclosure of information and allowing gossip to ensue. I maintained strict confidentiality to minimise risk to my informants and to my research.

To sum up, I therefore comfortably place myself as a researcher who is in some ways familiar with the subjects and whose background gives great insight into West Indian culture in Britain. However, I am undertaking anthropological research and must allow the field to be created by my informants not by my judgements, nor my experiences or fantasies. Yet, I acknowledge that my beliefs will encroach on the data through my interpretations and development of themes. To balance this I therefore practiced 'ethical' research and placed myself within the realm of a reflexive researcher.

### *Research Methods*

As stated above, I applied a reflexive approach when engaging with my research subjects. I therefore devised structured questionnaires to ask my subjects specific key questions and also occasionally employed the questions in a semi structured way. In reality I used more informal conversational type techniques, because it was not unusual to meet a certain amount of resistance from them as elderly West Indian people, due to their desire for privacy. This is because it is commonplace not to disclose personal information to family members, much less to a stranger.

As expected, they also withheld some personal information. However, I was flexible in my questioning so decided that I would ask a mixture of direct, open



ended and closed questions to facilitate a comfortable and open environment and elicit as much information as I could. I used more structured questions when interviewing professionals providing services to the elderly. My use of questionnaires helped me to ask questions pertinent to the topic of the research and they further contributed to the conversations I held with my informants who told me their stories.

I gained the consent (of four elderly informants) to tape conversations with them. However, I was aware that I would meet much resistance from the elderly people because they would not want me to record them. I therefore took notes during the interview and afterwards to ensure I captured the relevant points of the discussion and background information. Where I was able to tape and write notes in interviews, they ensured that I had written down the information correctly. I envisaged taking photographs to illustrate my written account, but I was aware that my informants might not want me to take their photographs and found this to be the case.

I immersed myself in participant observation, this involves using a variety of research techniques, to get close to people and make them feel comfortable enough so that observations and recording information about their lives can take place. Certainly, my aim was to capture their real life experiences (Marshall and Rossman cited in Silverman 1993), by learning 'first hand' about them and their culture (Burgess cited in Silverman 1993). Accordingly, I monitored my informants' behaviour as they engaged in their daily tasks (Bernard 1995). Through being with them and engaging in conversations that involved a certain amount of impression management and compromise (Bernard 1995), I bargained with them to allow me access to their inner thoughts, so that my data would be 'authentic' (Silverman 1993:10).

I used the narrative technique within my participant observation encounters to capture data. My use of narratives is similar to Chamberlain who suggests that narratives provide access to information concerning the experience of migration, even so it is important to understand the 'structure of narratives in

order to understand the story that they tell' (Chamberlain 2006:174). The narratives therefore present their historical and contemporary stories thereby providing unique, subjective information (Chamberlain 2006). This link of the past with the present allowed me to also contextualise my informants' familial networks, connections and disconnections. The narratives also allowed me to compile genealogies that help to give insight into their elderly lives and engagement with 'back home', as well as highlight their varied trans-national links. My use of methods therefore complemented the theories and assessment framework that I utilised to analyse and assess my data. I am able to assess the impact of familial separation by distance, and show how new associations with the local community and the state affect their sense of belonging. I thereby acknowledge the subjective material that I used to construct personal narratives must be handled carefully to ensure validity of the stories, and consequently my outcomes.

Fog Olwig and Besson (2005) draw on Peacock and Holland to highlight how narratives bring out accounts of 'lives lived' and allow an understanding of the structure of the past, present as well as the future (2005:1-2). Narratives enable an understanding from four vantage points, namely, place and placement, inclusion and exclusion, travel and home and Caribbean identities, within the social economic and political context (2005:8). Similarly, such stories of lives are vital to my data collection. My research framework reflects this multifaceted approach, and the personal narrative approach is an important pertinent research tool. Furthermore, it is most useful because my informants' complex cultural background is reflected in the life story where their past, present and future are brought together. Through my employment of the narrative as a data collection method my informants' personal activities, relationships and social life engagements are uncovered allowing an assessment of their disconnections and connections.

The narrative therefore encapsulates information about the social processes, changes and the people whom they are in contact with through their unfolding stories, similar to that shown by Gardener (2002) in her research on Bengali

elders in East London. Through this method I also gained information about my own informants as individuals and as a group. The narrative therefore provides a useful data collection tool to researchers and myself because it allows us to understand life experiences in various social contexts (Caplan 1997). I am thus able to assess my informants' actions and the actions undertaken by others on their behalf that affect their sense of belonging.

My research subjects are my main focus because they are central to my enquiry. Barnett's (1993) insight into the life of a runaway slave in Cuban society places his subject at the centre of his research, as I place mine, similarly utilising his auto-biographical style to enable an understanding of experiences that occurred in the past that are unobservable in the present and also to gain information regarding people now deceased. Through assessing each of my informants and compiling information about their family of orientation I gained information about the past that involved access to links they had to those now deceased who influenced their current lives. Similarly, I am influenced by Lewis's (1983) *Children of Sanchez*, in which he presents multiple biographies allowing a panoramic view of each individual to emerge. I also gained a view of my informants' world from many angles, such as inter-generational, lineal, trans-national, as well as the personal and inter-personal views concerning my informants' lives, actions and engagements. Overall, the narrative facilitated an understanding of the individual self and how the wider social structure affects it and the increasing individuality that develops (Fairhurst 1997) and consequently affects my informants' sense of belonging.

Although an important mode of investigation I am cautious of my use of the narrative. I am aware that it is not possible to cross-check all the data, so I assume some bias has entered from my subjects' interpretation of their lives. However, I am able to see some of the experiences that they describe, such as their isolation where they say they have loose kin ties and by asking the scheme managers and other workers I could to cross-check and thereby validate some information. Though I am aware of my inability to cross-check the historical personal data used to compile their genealogies.

The narratives containing my informants' memory of events is transmitted through their language, subsequently I recognise that the language I use to convey their thoughts is important. Dwyer (1987) found that through interpreting the Moroccan Arabic language the context and importance of events altered. Through both recording their information and writing-up the data I thought about how I would represent my informants in order to be authentic to their voice. I therefore allowed my data to reflect their vernacular so I have used the Creole language (patois) in addition to a more standard form of English. Indeed Chevannes (1994) used Creole and formal English to represent the voice of informants in his research in Jamaica. I am consequently aware that this also involves alteration through the translation and interpretations. Indeed, Oscar Lewis (1983) admitted that through translation he lost a lot of information due to the difficulty of translating lower class Mexican Spanish. Accordingly, I am aware that my interpretations are compromised because I am writing a thesis that has particular academic requirements and needs to be used by people who do not understand Creole (patois).

### *Inanimate objects*

I am aware that in addition to their spoken words stories are embedded in the environment occupied by my informants. Memories are objectified in objects and are on display as part of everyday life so the past paradoxically becomes part of the present (Fairhurst 1987). Such objects are usually on display in homes or within the immediate social world. My elderly informants have objects in the form of pictures, letters, furniture, and decorations in their homes that hold a story and meaning that helped to express their experience, and I drew upon these to gather information as they were presented to me in their homes. I was also influenced by Bell (1987) who used household objects such as slippers, a purse, a clothesline, pictures and a sewing machine to raise questions that provided her with information. I often used their household objects to start conversations, such as foodstuffs, cooking vessels and pictures. I particularly acknowledge Bell's (1987) suggestion that interviewing people in

their social field will 'produce intimate, direct and reflective material' (1987:259) that I found a beneficial resource to utilise.

### *Memory*

My use of narratives meant that I relied heavily on my informants' memory, although information recall and recounting was often censored. Indeed, Connerton (1989) uses Bergson's suggestion that memory recall involves the habitual storytelling of an experience and the recollection of specific parts of events. I encountered periods of silence while their self-censorship took place as they protected information that they found too personal or controversial to disclose (Poland and Pederson 1989). They censored out painful and traumatic events, perhaps due to feeling ashamed. On encountering silences, I often tactfully engaged in further dialogue, to try to fill the gaps, but undoubtedly some remained. Certainly, past experiences can also be viewed in a different way in the present moment to that which actually occurred. I was mindful of this and probed further but could not fully control this aspect either.

I also recognise that memory is both personal and cultural being socially organised, for Halbwachs asserts that through 'membership of a social group, particularly kinship, religious and class affiliations, individuals are able to acquire, localise and recall their memories' (1989:36). This is because the recent and past memories are bound together by thoughts held in common within the members of a group who assist in creating a framework in which memories are put and localised. Connerton (1989) comments that we must infer that through communication between people information is passed on through generations. These acts of transfer or intervals across the generations assist in the creation of traditions that find themselves embedded in memory, according to Bloch (cited in Connerton 1989). I intended to find out about my informants' ideas on ageing, from their upbringing. This gave me an insight into their responses to ageing and being elderly from a cultural and personal point of view. Indeed, my informants showed that omissions were transmitted through generations and contained within the kinship structure. For where loss

of kin occurred they were not remembered or spoken about, thus creating gaps. I found this often occurred in 'their stories' that I propose became embedded in the cultural practice of recounting kinship ties that I term '*dis-associating*' from kin, to indicate the omissions and loss. Through understanding this wider application of memory I could assess the 'mundane ways in which ordinary members of a culture produce and recognise intelligible courses of action' (Kitsinger and Frith 1999:299), as my informants continued with the cultural and social practices regarding information dissemination.

### *Outline of chapters*

In chapter 2, I present the historical background that underpins the research, highlighting theoretical debates appropriate to my research concerns. This chapter therefore contains a literature review of the development of the familial structure, migration, trans-national connections, personhood and belonging in respect of my elderly West Indian informants. I thereafter present my analytical and assessment framework. This information serves to provide an understanding of the familial structure presented by other anthropologists as integral to the bonding power of place and space regarding belonging, and to highlight the influence of this in my research. I show how my findings and theoretical suggestions fit in with the previous literature, complement it and raise further questions about gender, matrifocality, individualism, connections to family land and returning home. I suggest my elderly informants' engagement with the state is problematic but has become a central interlocking mechanism involved in their refocused sense of belonging.

In chapter 3, I provide an understanding about this group of black elders in order to contextualise them in the research. I look at the diversity of this elderly group and uncover their personal views about their local environment as elders in Brixton. I also present the complex encounter they face in growing old in Britain and in the sheltered housing scheme that challenges their sense of placement in the society as black elderly people. I contrast and compare this with the notion of elderliness they encountered in the West Indies, Jamaica in

particular, because these elderly people also have expectations based on their formative and recent experiences in that society. Most maintain contact with it as a place of origin and residence as well as gaining experience as an elder there from a failed attempt to return home. As elders they also highlight the ambiguous definition of the elderly in Britain that is personified through their multi-faceted views on their elderliness.

Chapter 4 highlights that belonging to a place and community has always been difficult for my elderly informants. Using information about their genealogies, I ascertain the form of families that they were born into. I examine and evaluate the effect that familial dispersal, due to migration, plays in the formation of their pattern of kinship ties and contact. My use of genealogies provides the ethnographic detail that brings out the loss, separation, fragmentation, and cyclical nature involved in the dispossession and movement of family members. This ultimately affects their ability to return home particularly as it is acknowledged that family, place and belonging are intertwined.

In Chapter 5, I explore the gender differentiation found in family connections that result from my informants' unions, marriages, separations and divorces. I highlight a trend of familial disruption for various personal and economic reasons that created the emotional and physical distances in their families as a result of their separated households. I examine the gendered pattern of kin associations and matrifocality. I also contrast the notions of movement and fixity in community building as important trends that contribute to understanding their culturally mobile sense of belonging.

Chapter 6 provides an exploration of the social pathways that my informants' take and I examine how they negotiate belonging both to the sheltered housing scheme and the local community. I uncover how their belonging is negotiated through their engagement in social activities with fellow residents and non-residents. Paradoxical issues arise between the elderly concerning their inclusions and exclusions that result in separations and divisions among them within the community at the scheme and in the locality. This highlights the

heterogeneous nature of their group and community. However, I investigate my elderly subjects as active participants in shaping their world that helps them to feel 'at home' and to develop a shared sense of belonging.

Chapter 7 probes further into the interface between my informants' and the state through assessing the impact of the culturally specific service provision. This chapter therefore provides insight into the complexity that the elderly person faces in engaging with state services at the scheme. I highlight the paradox concerning the way their cultural adaptation is shaped in respect of the issue of their identity. I argue that their state involvement is met with conflict and resistance though the services are necessary and life sustaining. This chapter explores the individual and the state in collision and it also provides a critical exploration of the workers' indifference in responding to my informants' ethnicity and culture. Nevertheless, the workers also use their personal agency that helps to provide a more responsive service to the personal and cultural needs of the elders, thereby suggesting that although the state is an important aspect regarding facilitating their belonging it is also problematic.

In chapter 8 I provide a conclusion to the questions posed in the thesis. I suggest an explanation regarding my informants' belonging and where they find placement, in addition to highlighting where my summations fit with and depart from the pertinent theories used. Finally, I suggest further avenues of research.

### *Conclusion*

I conclude this introductory chapter by recognising that I used a variety of research techniques to engage in my field and with my informants. I ensured that they were appropriate to enable me to gather information that aligned well with both my framework of assessment and theoretical interpretations. I tried to maintain my informants' privacy as well as engage them in the research. They created a boundary that acted as a safeguard behind which they could stay or cross over. This enabled them to feel comfortable with me and with themselves during the research process. Such self-censorship enabled them to balance



how much they told me about themselves and their personal lives. It is necessary to highlight that I am aware that this censoring has drawbacks because it omits part of the picture, a part that will remain unknown. However, due to cultural and personal reasons they controlled that which they made public.

My use of the life story, as part of the narrative device for information gathering, utilised the life history of my informants' that also enabled genealogical charts to be created. These maps contained information that underpins the whole thesis, being a specific topic of two chapters. I ensured that I respected their wishes to remain anonymous, secretive, and private, to maintain personal dignity and pride, whilst utilising their life stories to convey historical experiences that explained their contemporary ones.

## Chapter 2

### **Caribbean kinship, migration and belonging: theoretical and regional analysis**

#### *Introduction*

This chapter provides background information concerning the central focus of this thesis, in which I explore belonging in respect of the elderly migrants who originate from the West Indies. They currently reside in a sheltered housing scheme provided by the government who also provide support and care services to them. I suggest a tie exists between my elderly informants' sense of belonging, their kinship structure and the consequences of migration. The separations caused by migration affect familial relationships and the role kin play in determining their belonging. This predisposes my informants to having loose fragmented kinship ties. Consequently, I explore their family formation to understand the connections, fractures and disassociations that cause residency in sole household occupancy as elders. I suggest, as a result, that they have developed an alliance with the British welfare state whose role influences their sense of belonging.

The chapter unfolds as follows; I introduce the definition of belonging, thereafter the chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, I provide an evaluation of the family structure my elderly informants were born into and highlight the binding institution of family land that facilitates belonging for some of my informants. In the second section, I explore the impact of migration on their sense of belonging. I accordingly suggest that migration diminishes the ability to maintain and strengthen bonds through family land association, as external forces ensure the continual fragmentation of kin members. Indeed, some elders attempt return to the West Indies, particularly to Jamaica, but this proved problematic and eventually impossible for them to make the return permanent. Ultimately, I suggest that belonging in the West Indies and Britain is problematic as they find subaltern placement in both due to their difference as 'other', whilst maintaining their cultural affiliation as West Indian, particularly

Jamaican. I introduce the two main theories that I use to explain how they negotiate their place in society, from Gramsci (1990) and Bhabha (1994). Gramsci's (1990) theory on social transformation assists me to comment on their actions, and the actions of others who advocate on their behalf, enabling the assertion of their identity that underpins their sense of belonging. Bhabha's (1994) conception of the 'third space' is also influential and I use this to interpret my informants' placement. I also introduce my analytical framework that shows the integrated approach I use regarding the collection and evaluation of my data.

### *Defining belonging*

Sheller (2003) reminds us is that the creolisation process occurring through social and cultural development, is connected to economic power and is typified by movement. This is because worldwide capitalist expansion requires a labour force that becomes mobile in order to find employment. As a result, industry and consequently people move into different nation states and the influx affects the host nation so the population, social structure and culture adapts accordingly. My elderly informants are part of the West Indian culture of creolisation and moved through migration. Interestingly, Sheller provides a critique of the theories of creolisation suggesting that it represents continual transformation rather than a settling down to a particular place and cultural formation. Likewise, I argue that migration affected my elderly informants through their life course, particularly their sense of belonging, kinship structure and resulting ties. Sheller states creolisation is,

'a new claim to belonging to a locale ... grounded in movement, difference and transformation rather than stasis or permanence ... that is to say that it refers to a process of being uprooted from one place and regrounded in another such that one's place of arrival becomes a kind of reinvented home. It implies the displacement (yet not total loss) of a previous home/culture and the claiming of a new place of belonging. It also carries the connotation of a mobility and mixture of peoples, cultures, languages and cuisines, but in a way which specifically privileges subaltern agency against the power of a colonizing

'centre'. Being 'creole' destabilises the very notion of home.' (Sheller 2003:296-7).

It is this process of movement, de-stabilisation and re-homing that is at the centre of my research. For I examine the displacement and relocation of my elderly informants out of the West Indies. Nevertheless, I propose that they retain an emotional attachment to their former home through maintaining a West Indian identity and cultural traits. Indeed some tried to return home permanently to live.

I therefore utilise the concept of belonging that describes the merger between private, public and power relations involved in culture building, where belonging is associated with land and place through time (MacLeod 2005). Thus, I accept that land owning and education affects political influence in society and that, a 'sense of place', is inextricably bound up with a sense of power and ownership (Massey cited in MacLeod 2005:67). Indeed, my working class informants left home due to poverty, inequality, unemployment and non-viable 'family land' holding. Similarly, residency in Britain remains tied to their economic inability to return home and the economic stability provided to them through state provisions.

Belonging also encompasses linking with other people with a similar cultural experience and identity. Hall therefore describes West Indian cultural identity as the unique complex black experience that harbours oneness (cited in Skelton 2005:69-70). Indeed I find that my black elderly informants carry this uniqueness with them on migration to England, keeping their cultural familiarities, such as speech, food and family structure, thereby maintaining their cultural affinity, whilst engaging in new experiences that affect some of these practices in significant ways. It is through these retentions, that I argue they maintain their 'Westindianness'. I therefore examine how this affects their relationship within British culture and with the state. Undeniably, my informants are able to act within their cultural form because they bring their memory with them (Michel 2006), and this illuminates their difference to the host nation, providing the opportunity to negotiate their belonging.

## *Caribbean Kinship: Family*

### *The role of kinship*

I am concerned to understand how migration affected my informants' kinship structure and to uncover the extent to which they, like other migrant groups, recompose as suggested by Sagalem (2001). Overall, I agree that migration adversely affects the family and contributes to the social disruption and break-up of families (Daugaard-Hanson 2005). Consequently, I examine the ways in which migration causes fracture in the family structure leaving my elderly informants reliant on the state and other sources for support.

The following literature assists me to position my elderly informants in relation to the West Indian kinship structure, assessing its development and changing role in relation to belonging. The literature provides relevant theories to examine how migration affects my informants' life course. This focus allows me to assess the contemporary role kinship plays in determining their belonging. I also raise pertinent questions that will provide new ethnographic data on the changing aspects through time and space regarding the working-class migrant kinship structure. Overall, I suggest that my informants, as working-class, elderly migrants, experience rupture by migration that has affected their position in society. Consequently, their relationships back home have varied through time making return difficult. However, as residents in England they have found a secure place to reside. Nevertheless, although the state ultimately assumes important roles in their lives that hitherto kin met, aspects of their life experiences remain problematic.

### *Origins of the lower class black family structure*

My literature review includes the assessment of research carried out in different Islands, for as (Hoetink (1985) suggests literature concerning the family structure of lower-class West Indians carried out in different countries in the Caribbean provides transferable inferences. My informants, apart from one elderly woman with origins in Guyana and Trinidad, originate from Jamaica and

share, in the majority, similar lower class status. I therefore agree the family pattern reflects those found in the Caribbean and provides a statement of their cultural and ethnic identity (Chamberlain 2005:182).

The lower class black family structure in the West Indies originates from the new Creole culture that appeared as resistance to the plantation system in what Mintz (cited in Besson 1979) describes as reconstituted peasantries. Indeed, Clarke (1999), as well as Henriques, and M.G. Smith thought that the 'dominant influence has undoubtedly been that of slavery' (cited in Barrow 1996:7), R.T Smith (1990) also agrees slavery was an important catalyst. Beckles also uncovered family patterns emerging on estates and between estates during slavery, finding monogamous unions that were not co-residential<sup>5</sup>, as well as co-residential and nuclear families in the rural areas (cited in Barrow 1995:55-56). In addition, Barrow suggests that the church and religious beliefs are great influences on the family structure, from her work in Barbados (Barrow 1995, 1998). Overall, there is much debate concerning the origin and influences that dictate its form.

However, the family structure clearly harbours European cultural influences but whether African retentions are involved remains disputed as part of the continuing black family debate that began in the 1930s by Herskovits and Frazier. Herskovits suggested that the historical link with Africa specifically West African polygamy remains, though diluted by European influence (cited in Barrow 1996:5). In contrast, Frazier initially proposed that the forces of enslavement annihilated the African heritage of the poor black people, consequently disorganised family units developed (Mintz and Price 1992).

Nevertheless, Mintz recognised that African ideas influenced and helped to remodel culture, the development of institutions and communities (Barrow 1996:8). Indeed, Barrow (1995) shows that the Afro-Caribbean population defined marriage and created a family morality drawing on their African roots

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<sup>5</sup> It was common for slaves to marry and live apart on different estates (Barrow 1995:55).

and European norms within the constraints of their physical socio-economic circumstances.

Claims of promiscuity, illegitimacy and immorality arose from academic interest in the 1940s, in the era in which my informants were young adults and part of the type of families studied in Jamaica. Simey therefore described the family structure at that time as a 'loose', 'unstable' and without form, creating 'casual', 'promiscuous' and 'transitory' relationships, although he found 'faithful' concubinage, many 'illegitimate' children existed (cited in Barrow 1996). Certainly, these children experienced informal fostering arrangements (cited in Barrow 1996).

The household composition is therefore an important area to explore, indeed Davenport (1961) examined the working-class rural household in Jamaica from a different perspective, focusing on the household group. He uncovered a family form that adhered to the norms and laws of legal marriage but harboured specific features that he described as sub-cultural, because it lacked precise organisational shape thereby being unable to be self-sufficient. This focus on the household exposed the family form of its inhabitants and led to an understanding of the composition of kinship ties. Davenport therefore differentiates kin members into 'near' and 'far' family because the household consists of co-resident features with a skewed shape<sup>6</sup> (1961: 445). Nonetheless, he found the family to be 'co-operative', 'loving', sharing and affectionate. R. T. Smith (1990) also viewed kinship as wider than the nuclear or extended unit, for it also extends outward to the ethnic group itself, with intra-village kinship ties. Likewise, when looking at my informants' formative kin ties in chapter 4, I find that the kin of my respondents dispersed into different locations and often members lost connections. In addition to marriage, I therefore find a situation more akin to that which M.G. Smith describes, where families reside across households, being diverse and brittle, that leads to extra-residential unions or visiting relations (cited in R.T. Smith 1996). These

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<sup>6</sup> The skewed shape occurs where a son remains in his household of orientation and brings in a spouse or series of non-legal spouses who may also bring into the household children from previous partners.

scenarios ultimately result in my informants maintaining limited kinship ties that further dwindle when they and other family members migrate, thereby limiting the potential kinship contact and support thus enabling a reliance on the British state.

In addition, Davenport (1961) interestingly found that people left the family household to find work. Indeed, I found that both my male and female respondents moved from the rural family home to find work in the capital of Jamaica, Kingston. Parents therefore left their children back in the rural areas where other family members cared for them whilst they send goods and money to provide for them, as well as making the occasional visits to see them. Also, I found that on in the late 1950s and early 1960s some of my informants migrated to England without their children, and this affects the role such children play with regards to assisting my informants as elderly people.

The lower class black family structure undoubtedly has weaknesses. Recent research carried out in Britain reflects the notion of vulnerability in the West Indian family structure that contains a high percentage of households with only one adult, with nearly half of all households being sole occupancy (Owen 2001:75). Definitely all of my informants lived alone, reflecting the reality that people from the Caribbean, over sixty years old, form the largest new elderly ethnic minority population in England and are 'one of the most vulnerable groups within the Caribbean communities' (Plaza 2001:219). Due to occupying this weak position in retirement, a sense of uselessness occurs as they play a limited role in their family as grandparents, although there are some 'transnational flying grannies' that visit relations abroad (Plaza 2001:229). On examining the kinship role my elderly informants play in their family it becomes apparent that they are afforded different roles, often marginal although some have a more prominent position in their family than others.



### *Class and the family structure*

Scholars have stated that the lower class black family structure in the Caribbean does not follow the 'ideal' nuclear family structure. Thereby the black family is termed deviant nevertheless integrated into Caribbean society. This incorporation results from the overarching European moral and cultural superiority that creates a system governing the populace of a society through the process of cultural adaptation, termed creolisation (R.T. Smith 1988). Indeed, the lower class family is politically and economically marginalised, as M.G. Smith (1965), who influenced by J. S. Furnivall's concept of the plural society in the Far East, proposed. Furnivall found that different racial and cultural groups were economically and socially divided but ruled under the imposed colonial power. However, the lower class position held by black people under such governance in the West Indies affects the familial form and how it operates in practice. Nonetheless, the lower class people tried to become more socially active and politically engaged. Consequently contesting their status, for example, under Bustamante's leadership, in Jamaica, the black lower class obtained recognition and adult suffrage (M.G. Smith 1965), moving a step closer into mainstream society.

More recently Besson reflects on the culture building process of the lower class, suggesting that 'holding scarce land rights they developed a system of landholding including the African concept of landholding... but departed from African restricted unilineal descent' and introduced gender equality (2002:29-30). I also propose that perhaps the lower-class black family is not totally outcast, particularly as they form a large percentage of the population in Jamaica, and as Anderson-Levy (2001) suggests they appear, in part, to practice similar relationship patterns as the middle-class people. Nonetheless, they have distinctive characteristics and experiences that relate to their poverty and this provides the force for its structural components and the external forces that influence it. As a result, I suggest, my informants, as members of the lower class or working class group, experience destabilisation resulting from migration that in turn affects kinship ties and consequently belonging.

### *Family land*

The previous status of my informants' ancestors as chattel slaves, then freed slaves at the bottom of the social class hierarchy, influences the development of the family structure, as familial ties arise out of their disenfranchisement and impoverishment that drove the quest to secure a place in society. The West Indian kinship structure therefore evolved through an association between landholding and the development of a sense of belonging. I therefore looked at the binding and weakening power of family land as an important determinant regarding maintaining kinship ties through residency and attachment, conversely assessing how detachment occurs. This enabled an understanding concerning my informants' belonging to 'back home' after migrating, staying away and returning.

Insights into the development of kinship and land are found in the work of Solien (1959), who utilises Goodenough's finding that in addition to descent, land rights restrict and define membership of a group, based on the location of birth and area chosen for residency. Solien's (1959) research among the Black Caribs of Central America highlighted that nonunilineal descent created kinship belonging and determined residential rights to land. Similarly, Davenport (1961) identified that plots of residential land determined family organisation in Jamaica. This development is traceable to the slavery period where slaves were cultivating house yards. Family land therefore emerged through the creolisation process as a consequence of the plantation system (Besson 1979, 2002; Olwig 1981). After emancipation the peasantry received land for personal use from their former slave owners and captured land to provide provisions (Besson 1999a). As part of the culture building process the descendants of the former slaves, who are a heterogeneous group, with differing levels of poverty also purchased, leased and squatted on land belonging to someone else (Besson 2002).

As poor people the freed slaves tried to develop economic stability. Family land holding represents this attempt as the structure sustains all of the original founder's descendants through both genders in perpetuity and one cannot be

alienated from this freehold right because it represents security and prestige (Besson 1988). Therefore through land inheritance that flows from one generation to the next, family members are linked and rooted to a place of belonging (Besson 1979). An institution that R.T. Smith (1996) accepted as harbouring complex patterns of relations that fostered a sense of belonging to kin through linkages to a place.

Family land is therefore available to future generations as it flows through the unrestricted cognatic descent system (Besson 2002). Indeed Besson found a three dimensional family system including an open system of serial polygamy in Martha Brae, Jamaica. This family system also includes 'ego-focused bilateral kinship networks with no specific boundaries, rather than formal kindreds; and an ancestor-focused unrestricted cognatic descent system that forges overlapping and ever-increasing family lines that are most fully developed in dispersed family-land corporations' (2002:281). Therefore, family ties provided support locally within Martha Brae and outside of it with family members in other villages (Besson 2002:282). This description of the kinship structure indicates that descent contains gender equality, family members are connected without any restrictions and family ties are connected through the institution of family land.

In addition, family land represents freedom and plays a symbolic role in the formation of identity providing the link between internationally dispersed families (Besson 2002:292). Indeed, family land remains important as Mills recently found that eighty per cent of households in Carriacou share a claim to it with relations living abroad (Mills 2007:236). Similarly, some of my elderly informants returned to family land as elders but reintegration and belonging proved problematic. I suggest why family ties are fragmented and why return is problematic.

### *Critiques of family land influencing my theoretical framework*

I turn to address the interesting critiques concerning family land because they raise important issues that inform my assessment framework in respect of looking at the role of kin affecting my elders' sense of belonging.

Crichlow (1994) asserts that Besson ignored the poor who had limited access to land ownership. In reply, Besson (1995a) asserts that she recognises the differences within the family land institution and includes the different segments of the peasantry in her description. For family land varied in size where some of the peasantry could purchase family land, whereas those who could not leased and rented land, and the poorest squatted on land belonging to someone else (Besson 2002). Indeed the size of the cottages, amenities and materials used in the construction of homes continue to vary according to cost and available resources (Besson 2002:198). Similarly, my group of elderly informants' mirror these variations concerning their original homes and some elders were taken in and cared for by other family members or a friend so these familiar circumstances enable comparisons with the peasantry.

Further, Crichlow (1994) questions the construction of the term family land from her assessment in St. Lucia. Her main point of contention is that she disagreed with placing the plantation as the critical institution rather than the family. Crichlow (1995) therefore calls for further investigation to understand how the family structure emerged and the notion of citizen. My research addresses aspects of citizenship for investigating belonging provides some useful insights in this area. I provide a contribution from contemporary analysis from my assessment of the determinants acting as the binding power affecting my informants' kinship structure and how it affects them as citizens. For I also suggest that external influences are very powerful, such as the intervening influence from the British state that has an important affect on my informants' identity and their relation to family members.

Crichlow (1994), using a historical process, proposed that it is an error to assume that family land arose from conflicts between planters and peasants.

Further suggesting that the development of family land theory and practices is ambiguous rather than showing how it emerged in relation to other changes in society through time. Crichlow (1994) therefore suggests further research is required to examine the complexity of family land in the post-emancipation era, where the complexity and ambiguity arose. Following on, Besson (2007) suggests inconsistencies and an oversimplification in Crichlow's critique of Mintz, Trouillot and Besson's own work. For Crichlow appears to agree rather than correct the concept of the peasantry and their resistance to living conditions. Although not based in the immediate post-emancipation era, I believe my research contributes further to understanding the changing influence of family land in the twenty first century. I therefore suggest that my informants' contemporary economic status, as working-class people and migrants living abroad, affects their ability to return to family land, as their relation to it has varied through time, that result from continued relative poverty and their reliance on the British state.

I certainly find the notion of family land as an institution useful as it helps me to understand the connections between my elderly informants, place and kinship ties, as I examine how the bond between attachment and belonging develop in relation to residency. In my research I also recognise the historical process that underpins my elderly informants' familial relations, I therefore utilise a lineal assessment process to look at how their kinship ties change through their life course resulting from migration.

I also find Maurer's (1997) criticisms of Besson useful, as he criticises her for creating both a romanticisation and hybridisation of the family structure. For in opposition to Besson who sees the peasantry as establishing family land, he looks to the law as the determining landholding factor. Nevertheless, Besson (1999b) upholds her view citing peasantry action as influencing recent land holding legislation<sup>7</sup>. This shows that the peasantry (from which my elderly informants emerge) actively influence their kinship. Nevertheless, I find the

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<sup>7</sup> Besson (1999b) notes that the recent legislative changes in Jamaica were influenced by the Creole culture that developed, as local people influenced the structure of their family form and landholding patterns.

external economic forces fuelling migration very influential in determining kin ties and my informants' relation to their kin.

Trouillot (1998) argues that scholars have produced a cultural idealism regarding the family that masks inequality so he proposes the development of a new paradigm enabling a re-examination of the historical process of creolisation within the plantation, enclave and modernist contexts. For the outcome of this focus will enable a framework to examine the family that reflects the changing contexts of the creolisation process using time, space and power as markers. My eclectic framework responds to this suggestion and utilises the historical process and link between globalisation and migration as tools to provide an understanding of belonging within the contemporary era, using the time-space dynamic. I therefore include an historical analysis of my informants' family structure and compare their families of orientation and procreation to understand the structural patterns of their kinship formation, to assess kin ties, gender differentiation and the role of their kin.

### *The process of losing connection to family land*

It is clear that the power of family land as an institution determining belonging lessens for my elderly informants because the state now fulfils personal and social functions that are no longer performed by my informants' family members. In this position, the state becomes a powerful determinant of belonging for my informants who rely on the state due to their class and economic position. Rights to family land remain but actual engagement and sharing with kin cannot withstand the long-term absence of kin members so the attachment becomes symbolic more than physical. This is in keeping with the idea that access to family land can become restricted<sup>8</sup> (Fox 1967:156) and members become excluded<sup>9</sup> from it. Undeniably, my elderly informants

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<sup>8</sup> The term 'restricted' is used to describe the process through which family members lose their connection to family land. Land can become restricted to a family member if they no longer live on it. It can become pragmatically restricted if they have access to more than one area of family land but cannot practically reside on all of them, so they choose which one to affiliate with (Fox 1967).

<sup>9</sup> Davenport and Murdoch highlighted that land rights can be exclusive and irreversible, for the land rights taken up by parents or children determines affiliation for life. Indeed in Jamaica

experienced both restricted and pragmatic distancing from family land. Although absent family members can retain claims to family land (Besson 1979), 'crab antics'<sup>10</sup> may cause contention and trickery in the quest to assert the right to the land (Besson, 1979, 1988, 2002).

I therefore agree with Solien (cited in Besson 1979) that there is a restricting mechanism in the notion of family land. Consequently, I am also in agreement with Maurer (1997) who refutes the notion of equal sharing of family land because relinquishment occurs. Certainly, foreclosure<sup>11</sup> is assumed when the migrant stays away for a long period and is unable to economically contribute to it. This occurred for most of my informants with family land as they assume more of an 'outsider' status, although allowed to stay on it for both short and extended term visits. Consequently, family land has become less prevalent (Olwig 1997). In reality, I find that only one elder in my research attempted to live on his family land, whilst another showed concern about how she might integrate, and fit in with other people, if she could return 'home'.

Nevertheless, through their memories and dreams they retain a symbolic cultural attachment, as a place of identification rather than residency. Family land fulfils the function for them as an 'important socio-cultural site' (Olwig 1999:448). However, as my informants' relations to it and kin are not deeply maintained they cannot honour the wider economic and social obligations of attachment suggested by Olwig (1999). For, in order to feel belonging 'back home', those left 'back home' need to feel that they belong 'back home' with

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Clarke found family members could become excluded from family land where there is a high demand for land and land shortage, therefore once they left return became difficult for them and their children (Otterbein 1964). Perhaps this is because as Greenfield found in Barbados, family land offered a home and economic protection (Otterbein 1964).

<sup>10</sup> A situation where family members do not work together in harmony, where competition creeps in and they try to outwit each other. Likened to crabs in a barrel that hinder each other from climbing out by continually pulling the one closer to the exit back.

<sup>11</sup> When family members leave family land and do not return at all to visit, or make a permanent home elsewhere without making plans to return to family land, other family members expect they will not return. The person who left also accepts this situation. They assume they have relinquished their rights to the family land and other members take up residency, the avenue to return to it is therefore closed to the traveller in real terms as it become occupied by others. Many of my informants stayed away from their family land so could not return to it as the connection became too weak, as well as their economic inability to return, for others they never returned at all since migrating to England so in the end, in reality, left their family land. These issues are discussed in chapter 4.

them. Unfortunately, my informants' reconnection with back home proved to be both problematic and traumatic and they experience estrangement from the place they once knew well, and express that they do not know many family members well enough to feel they belong there long-term.

### *Gender*

I investigate the impact of gender in relation to unpacking the connections held between my informants and their children. This is because children are often a valuable resource to older people providing assistance and helping to create a sense of attachment and belonging.

With regards to the formation of family ties in the West Indian context, it is apparent from earlier research findings by Solien (1959) that the Black Caribs' bilateral kinship system features a strong emphasis on the female side. However, Davenport's (1961) assessment of the Jamaican kinship structure indicates land inherited through the eldest son. Thus suggesting a paternal line in operation to hold kin together and associate them to a place of belonging. Indeed, Besson (1979) proposes an equally strong male and female position, suggesting a kinship system based on the premise of gender equality in relation to land rights. Besson therefore proposed a complex kinship system based on an unrestricted system of exchange (Besson 2002:28).

However, due to estrangement from home and family land and loose kinship ties, I find that my elderly female informants fare differently than my male informants regarding kinship ties with their children in the British context. For on migration to England kinship ties were not empowered by the process of family landholding but affected by increasing nuclear residential units. Personal relationships therefore have greater effect on kinship ties and residency. In addition, the state intervenes powerfully in determining belonging by providing social and personal care services, housing and financial assistance to those alone or in need of external help, thus both enabling and sustaining individual residential units. Although both my female and male informants rely on the state, my female informants overall benefited from a greater sense of



integration into their local community through engaging in more supportive relationships with their children. Alternatively, I found more men in isolation and estranged from their children relying more heavily on friends and state services. I therefore found, through gender differences, that my informants held different positions in relation to their family that affected the roles they played out with each other and the role kinship and the state played in determining their belonging.

I reflect on R.T. Smith's (1990) contribution to the matrifocality debate and find it influential, for, R.T. Smith, unlike Clarke, who suggested fathers are predominantly absent, asserted that distinct gender roles and weak conjugal unions existed in which the father played out minimal functions. He thus used the term matrifocality to propose that women are the leading figures in the family but not the head of the family, a position my informants mirror, .

However, Barrow (1998) challenged the existence of male marginality by asserting that men self-define their masculinity and fatherhood. She consequently highlighted that some men also play specific supporting roles as brothers and uncles. Similarly, I found that a few of my male informants contributed to the household as shared breadwinner within their families before the relationships dissolved. Indeed, two of my informants became the sole parent after desertion by their partner or their un-timely death. Nevertheless, ties were not very strong.

Likewise, in the 1990s Lazarus-Back (1999) utilised Maurer's concept of the 'kinship event' from her research in Antigua, to question Clarke's earlier gender differentiations. The differentiations were reflected in the title of Clarke's book *My Mother Who Fathered Me*. Lazarus-Back (1999) criticised Clarke's marginalisation of the male by suggesting that men play a specific role within their families, because she found that the male role is highly regarded as it complements the female role. Consequently, Maurer proposed that men contribute to supporting their children through actions such as paying school fees and giving gifts on important occasions. Interestingly, Reynolds (2006) states, from her research in England that some men support their wives and

partners, maintain a connection with their children and financially support their upbringing, even if they do not live with them, and at times held power at the head of the family, this is in opposition to most of my male informants. However, due to the estrangements that I uncovered I assess the outcome regarding the strength of their ties as elders and question the respect afforded to my male elders who contributed to their children's household while absent.

Chevannes (2001) equally suggested from his research in Dominica the existence of a father-son bond as well as suggesting fathers' provide strict discipline. He proposed that, as role models, fathers provide an example of manhood to boys who copy them as they grow up. He also found that people married, engaged in multiple and extra-marital partnerships but unfortunately there were incidences of domestic violence. I therefore suggest traditional practice serves to explain why I find an inter-generational gendered pattern of relations between my informants' family of orientation and family of procreation. Nonetheless, as I fail to uncover many strong positive male role models I therefore propose that the elderly men mostly hold a weaker position in their family than elderly women. This finding is in contrast to recent suggestions by Goulbourne (2001), Bauer and Thompson (2006), and Reynolds (2001, 2006) that strong male ties exist. However, their research included a wider social class mixture in their sample, whereas my focus is solely on working-class elders and perhaps this makes the difference.

It therefore became clear, through looking at my informants' parenting experiences that the patterns regarding family ties are embedded in the kinship structure within the notion of matrifocality. I therefore investigate how matrifocality emerge between my elders and their children. Indeed, in relation to fathering, my male informants were mostly marginal within their families, showing a tendency more in keeping with the suggestions of earlier scholars such as Davenport (1961) and R.T. Smith (1996, 2001). Indeed, my informants seem to develop a family structure that closely resembled that described in earlier work by Simey (cited in Barrow 1996), and Clarke (1999) who saw the family as weak and unstable.

### *Migration and Belonging*

The fact that migrating is well established amongst people from the Caribbean, is highlighted by scholars such as Philpott (1973), Thomas-Hope (1986, 1992, 1995, 1998), Goulbourne (1999, 2001, 2006), Olwig (1993, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007), Chamberlain (1995, 2006), and Bauer and Thompson (2006).

Goulbourne (2002) asserts that 'in forthcoming decades people of Caribbean backgrounds are more likely than not to maintain some distinctive features of their identity or presence in Britain, resulting from their strong heritage as families embrace mixture and difference whilst they maintain a difference to the indigenous populations' (Goulbourne 2001:239-240). This I found to be true regarding my group of informants. Nevertheless some issues have not been addressed and require further empirical attention, such as family well-being, health, and disability (Goulbourne 2001:242). My research examines these areas for they influence a sense of belonging and provide arenas in which negotiation of belonging takes place.

### *Migration and legislation*

Migration is related to the structural development of the Caribbean rather than solely responding to calls from overseas (Chamberlain (1995). There are three important phases marking the Caribbean culture of migration, shaped by movement, absenteeism and return. Namely, the nineteenth century to the Second World War period, the post war era to the 1960s and from the 1960s to the present (Chamberlain 1998). It was in this latter period that the elderly people in my research migrated to England.

Certainly, the push factors of poverty and pull factors of work opportunities influence migration. Yet migration it is governed by immigration control. Migration to Britain during the 1950s and 1960s increased after the restriction to the United States under the Walter McCarran Act in 1952. However, Britain's doors started to close when immigration control began in 1962 (Foner 1979). Thereafter West Indian migration shifted again to the United States and

Canada. West Indian migrants in Britain could continue to bring over dependents up to 1971, thereafter one needed a work permit to enter and this undeniably affected the entry of children. This restriction also limited rights of their other kin members to join family members in Britain, indeed my informants became separated from siblings and children who either stayed in the West Indies or went to the United States of America or Canada.

Such extensive external migration affected internal structures in the Caribbean that created an increased dependency on family members abroad (Thomas-Hope (1992). However, family ties require maintenance in order to remain meaningful (Rapport and Dawson 1998). My informants' kin connections were broken and fractured by migration and this created a vacuum or gap regarding the ability of dispersed family members to support each other.

### *Globalisation and migration*

It follows that movement, separation and loss result from globalisation that intersects kinship practices as well as raising questions regarding power relations, equality, inclusion and exclusion (Franklin and McKinnon 2001). The study of migrant communities continues to rise as globalisation is transformed by trans-national capital expansion and the development of complex inter-relatedness between people and places that created paradoxical uncertainties arising from the movements (Hetherington 1998)<sup>12</sup>. These links contain inequality (King 1990), migration therefore has a great impact on the individual (Strathern 1995).

In order to assess the social phenomenon of migration that brought challenges to anthropology, scholars sought to explore the relationship between identity and fixity by using a stationery point to perceive and construct the world (Rapport and Dawson 1998). To be at home meant being emotionally fixed,

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin Hetherington (1998: 106) suggests dispersed and fragmented identities must be included in an understanding of a social space because travel is associated with resistance and transgression from a social space. For although identity is located in particular places that provide order and a symbolic significance for the performance of the identity paradoxical uncertainties arise from movement from it.

stationery or centred, as assumptions by Sahlins, Leach, and Lévi-Strauss suggest (cited in Rapport and Dawson 1998). Sahlins views social groupings from a centre, from house to lineage, to village, to tribes, to other tribes. Leach (cited in Rapport and Dawson 1998) uses the ego as the centre of the social space from self, to sibling, to cousin, neighbour stranger, or from self to pet, livestock, game and wild animal. Alternatively, Lévi-Strauss employs the concept of myths as the explanatory device that suppresses time and space to a fixed spot (Rapport and Dawson 1998:21), taking a fixed homogeneous point of view rooting cultures and people in time and space. I also assess the impact of movement on kin ties in chapter 5, using time and space as markers, and I use my informant's ego similar to Leach as the centre of their social space and social relations that I alternatively see as mobile.

I also take a heterogeneous point of view in agreement with Geertz (cited in Rapport and Dawson 1998) who proposed a world without fixity because people continually move due to modernisation and enforced migration. Therefore as James Clifford suggests, these aspects must be included in an understanding of belonging for there are no longer any traditionally fixed, spatially and temporally bounded cultural worlds (Rapport and Dawson 1998:23).

Undeniably, Nettleford comments that Caribbean migrants engage in 'simultaneous acts of negating and affirming, demolishing and constructing, rejecting and reshaping ... in continual conflict' (cited in Sheller 2003:280). It is evident that culture therefore travels over great distances creating a new diversity of interrelationships, so there is no complete whole but heterogeneity as social identities arise from a multiplicity of experiences. Therefore, Geertz's suggestion that each 'local' point makes a 'global' point (cited in Rapport and Dawson 1998:25) applies to this research. For, world movement brings people and cultures together creating compression, or socio-cultural differences within the same 'time' and 'space' without socio-cultural boundaries. Hence, using the insights of Berger who proposed that the house is mobile, individualised, privatised and 'no longer a dwelling but the untold story of a life being lived' (cited in Rapport and Dawson 1998:25), as compression is evident in ordinary

life, I uncover the destabilising effect of movement on my informants' sense of belonging. Further, Hannerz's (1992) suggestion that migrant communities exist in a state of confusion and flux, where issues of integration are attended to but never resolved, is still valid, for my informants are engaged in a process of negotiating their belonging. This process is characterised by uncertainty and turbulent destabilisation (Parasteriadis (2000). Thus, as previously argued by Anwar (1979), I agree that by looking at points of merger rather than society as a whole we can form an assessment concerning integration. Subsequently, I investigate how my elderly informants merge and depart from fitting into mainstream British society.

I also find pertinent to the process encountered by my informants Gilroy's (1993) understanding of time and space that provides an understanding of historical time concerning exile, journeying and loss, through his theory of the contact zone (1993:198). Gilroy suggests that themes of escape, suffering, memory, fear and vulnerability arise when looking at migrant journeys. Indeed, psychological traumas compound by the need to fit into a new community comprising of complex cultures and varied diaspora inputs.

In relation to my research, I examine the concept of compression and belonging by looking at the respondents at home in the sheltered housing scheme in London to unpack their process of belonging. Indeed, the elderly people being influenced by their 'multi-identity' and the multi-cultural inputs to their lives, display interesting actions through their residency in the sheltered housing scheme therefore their residency harbours the story of their life being lived. In addition, it harbours the story about interrelationships, their engagement with family members, their relationship with the providers of their home, and associated services compressed in their story and these affect their sense of belonging.

### *Migration, separation and re-localisation*

The majority of my elderly respondents migrated to create a stronger economic base in order to survive, as well as to increase their status on their return home.

Not achieving this they remained part of the diverse community in Brixton. They therefore engage in uprooting, whilst paradoxically remaining attached, and psychologically, socially and even emotionally connecting through a process of re-rooting as they establish their link in this new location. Therefore, as Latham (2002) suggests, globalisation creates restratification and a new socio-cultural hierarchy. This structure contains a process through which displacement and re-intervention occurs (Papastergiadis 2000).

The time-space concepts<sup>13</sup> suggested by Thrift (cited in Gell 2001) and Serres (1999) proposed that actor networks exist across the globe and keep people connected by overcoming state boundaries. Wherein new technologies help to break down boundaries and bring about a situation in which there is no locatable locality (Meyrowitz 1998). In opposition to this notion of transcending distance Collier and Ong (2005) provide a view suggesting that global forms are often territorialized and this affects modern kinship systems for global connections do not always remain fluid.

Indeed, in relation to the Caribbean Besson (2005) highlighted that 'the Caribbean *oikoumenê*<sup>14</sup> reflects extreme experiences of disjuncture through time and space: early globalisation, intense colonisation, trans-Atlantic indenture and enslavement, and trans-national migration' (2005:17). 'Narratives tell of exile, enslavement, deportation, relocation, exclusion, emancipation and migration ... they reflect shifting histories or disjunctures in contexts of globalisation' (Besson 2005:17). Similarly, my informants experience such disjunctures and my data provides details of their management.

Certainly, my research provides a challenge to the global network theory because I find boundaries adversely affect my elderly informants' link with their

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<sup>13</sup> Thrift (Gell 2001) based his ideas on Haggerstrand's time-map that links space and time with environmental influences. He suggests that social relations therefore have spatio-temporal implications.

Serres (1999:2-8) highlights that humans look at unity and scorn groupings of things as separate units. Therefore things are meaningful when they come together. So we search for relationships and look for networks of connections where there are no boundaries between people located in different places. In this respect migration does not sever links with people at a distance for people continue to stay connected.

<sup>14</sup> A reference to Mintz (1996) who showed the Caribbean *oikoumenê* to be a culturally diverse region, created through the forces of European expansion.

kin in other territories. As some informants did not maintain links with dispersed kin and 'back home'. Therefore, their move to the city affected the rural tie that has weakened. Certainly, difficulties regarding re-connection to home are problematic due to the changes in society whilst absent. Surely, my informants encountered the 'outsider' status on return due to the emotional and social distance between them, home and kin because they were somewhat different. My research findings therefore oppose that of Linda Basch who proposes the Caribbean social structures assisted in the development of a 'deterritorialised nation state' (Foner, 2001:8) because migrants significantly connect back home. It is also in opposition to Olwig's (2005) assertion that the link with home remained and migrants returned home, settled and built homes because most of my informants could not manage such successful return home. Overall, my research findings are reflective of my sample that contains those who have both weaker economic ability and loose family ties and are reliant on the state. It therefore follows that they will not be able to significantly engage back home.

Interestingly, migrants do encounter both an association with home and the development of assimilation into England (Philpott 1973). Indeed, I also find, in agreement with Olwig, that 'deterritorialisation is not solely the loss of local rootedness but refers to the development of the cultural space that emerges in the global encounter' (1993:9). Connection to a place therefore emerges resulting from changed relationships with others and to the new place of residency where attachment grows. This is because psychologically people seek meaningful order to their lives so that a sense of cohesion exists rather than discord, so they challenge the fragmentation encountered in everyday life (Hetherington 1998).

Indeed attachment to the new migrant space developed as Olwig stated that New York 'is a site of significance in the wider movement in the Caribbean diaspora' (Olwig 2001:124), because migrants feel at home there. I therefore suggest, influenced by Olwig (2001), that Brixton becomes a new social and cultural site for my informants. However, I suggest that this takes on a particular form of paradoxical settlement, with limited travel for most elsewhere. I thereby accept that 'being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile



is not necessarily about being detached' (Ahmed et al 2003). Nevertheless, my informants develop an affiliation to England that is class determined. For, as Olwig (2002) showed, her middle-class West Indian informant in Chapel Town, Leeds integrated into British culture better than her working-class informant who was more comfortable in the West Indian community in Leeds. Similarly, my informants found affinity in the local West Indian community in the sheltered housing scheme (housing specifically black African/Afro-Caribbean people) and in Brixton, London.

My findings of disconnection therefore add further data to the body of knowledge concerning the global connections of working-class migrants. In this respect my research poses an alternative to recent work highlighting the strength of trans-national connections found amongst trans-national migrants by Bauer and Thompson (2006). My contribution presents different results because my sample contains solely working-class people, reliant on state benefits, with fragmented familial ties residing in a state-managed sheltered housing scheme.

My research is situated within the aforementioned flux and turbulence of cultural fusions encountered by migrants that affects their inclusion. Hence, my informants mirror the recent positioning found by Gardener (2002) concerning Bangladeshi migrant elders, whom she suggests are in a process of ethnic redefinition, 'entailing the active creation of a new cultural tradition that only has meaning in the British context' (2002:6). Similarly, I seek to uncover where my elderly informants fit in and how they negotiate their cultural and social place in British society. For, I also suggest, they have started a process concerning assimilation for this migrant group.

### *Agency*

Wardle, influenced by Simmel's link between agency and migration, proposed an interesting alternative view of Caribbean migration, seeing it as a route to seeking freedom and adventure (Wardle 1999:525). It appeared that migration is less about seeking to maintain links with home and more about fleeing the

constraints of hardship and oppression in the West Indies. So for Wardle, although migration brings disillusionment, it is still a powerful cultural ideal as freedom is explored through embarking on an adventure through travel. The migrant is therefore moved by the flight into the imaginative realm and therefore into extra-territoriality whilst engaging in circular-transmigration. Through this process he suggested that the migrants became ahistorical because they displace their 'self' into the fascination of 'others' seeking to move to an adventure rather than being solely moved by their past (Wardle 1999:525).

I find this a plausible explanation, two of my informants expressed the reason they migrated was to go on an adventure and to escape. Using their agency or desire they sought new things, people, and places to experience. However, I disagree with the notion of displacing their 'self' and being ahistorical. Travel was, and is, an expression of their freedom but they certainly maintain a sense of self, culture and Caribbeanness or 'Westindianness'<sup>15</sup>. Indeed, it is this sense of self that comes into conflict with their engagement with the state services that challenges their ethnic, cultural, self-identity and personal needs. The scheme workers supported them and pushed against the conflicting social, cultural and service policy boundaries enabling the maintenance of my informants' continued sense of 'Westindianness' in Britain.

Gramsci's (1990) perspective providing insight into the process of social change arising from actors in a subordinate position assisted by state administrators, influences my argument regarding agency. Consequently, I suggest the state, administrators and my elderly informants as ordinary people engage in negotiating change. Indeed, new initiatives enhance services in the community based on the notion of 'change-up' (ChangeUp/Defra 2007), where changes at the grass roots, from workers closest to the public inform future service developments. This illuminates and activates Marcus Garvey's

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<sup>15</sup> I use the word 'Westindianness' to describe the cultural affiliation, practices and personal identity, I suggest, my informants belong to and connect with. This connection is held on a practical level, where they continue to express their identity as West Indian as they also engage greatly in the local West Indian culture and community, in Brixton. The word also encapsulates their romantic attachment to the West Indies as a region they belong to harbouring an attachment to their particular Island, predominantly, Jamaica.

suggestion that the Caribbean's revolutionary tradition seeks to re-create social processes both individually and collectively (Clarke 1971).

Gramsci (1990), a Marxist concerned with social change, saw society governed by 'ideological hegemony' where beliefs, values, cultural traditions, and myths functioned on a mass level to perpetuate the existing order. Concerned with change, he advocated that a revolution was needed with rational-cognitive activity as well as passionate, emotional commitment to effect change (1990:17). Liberation would therefore produce a 'counter-hegemonic' world-view within a new 'integrated culture' (Gramsci 1990:17) that would arise from a crisis. My parallel is made here, for contemporary society is in a crisis situation concerning the meaning of 'Britishness', avenues for valuing diversity that include various ethnicities and cultures that are constantly evolving. There are also issues concerned with the financial and management of services for those marginalised and in need. Although a counter-hegemonic revolution has not occurred, a challenge to the structure and governance of British society ensues.

The changes that made in this respect concerning my elders are contextualised within the British context of race relations. This elderly group represent the first wave of migrants in the 1950s and 1960s. They were invited to come to work in England but on arrival they were not welcomed and thereafter race riots ensued. They continually encountered problems concerning housing and social integration, excluded from the churches and other social institutions. For example, after significant residency their children encountered difficulties regarding unfair treatment because there were clashes with the police. Further, unlike their parents, they suffered great unemployment and there were, and still remain, concerns about under-achievement in education and their over-representation in the mental health and criminal justice systems. Throughout the period since migration, a political lobby developed within the West Indian community and affected the law and policy under the Race Relations Act 1976 with subsequent amendments. These lobby groups comprised of the intellectuals and ordinary people in the West Indian community as well as other sympathisers. As members of the West Indian community, my informants

benefited from the wider desire among those in the community to be recognised and to fight for change to enable equality. Thus, I find the Gramscian (1990) notion of making changes from the subordinate position, involving ordinary people and intellectuals in continual operation useful. Indeed Gramsci recognises the subaltern position of marginalised groups and the lower class, whose social status affects their exertion of power. However, they exert their power nonetheless. My informants as part of the lower-class occupy this subaltern position in society. Nevertheless, their activities influence the law and the equal opportunity and diversity policies that govern the development and organisation of services at the scheme, themes that I explore in chapter 7.

Gramsci (1990) asserted that for transformation to arise an awakened political consciousness would be needed because 'only the man who wills something strongly can identify the elements which are necessary to the realisation of his will' (1990:30). Kraidy (2005) suggests that individuals use their will to affect the structure that governs them. Thus my informants, and other West Indian migrants, as well as others on their behalf, exerted their will. In doing so, they become politically active because their negotiation of belonging is part of the continued contemporary political debate regarding identity, placement and belonging, and their activities are important conduits underpinning these concerns.

Therefore the local place is often the scene of power struggles between local actors, who themselves are embedded in larger external networks. Useful here is Williams's (1977) questioning of Gramsci's proposal of social change suggesting that change is problematic in this context because dominance and subordination still need to be recognised as a complete actual social process, rather than an abstract ideology. This is because we have to understand the alternative meanings, values, opinions, and attitudes accommodated within society. I acknowledge this concern and utilise Gramsci's abstract construct by assessing the lived experiences of my migrant informers as I examine values, opinions, and attitudes, responding similarly with an abstract interpretation that I believe aptly describes their position.

The local is a site of both empowerment and marginalisation (Kraidy 2005:154). I believe this is my informants' position, particularly as I think it is still true that 'imagined communities of the modern nation state lack sacredness', so admission to it and membership within it are fluid as society is now marked by 'absorptions' (Benedict 1983:3). I acknowledge my informants' incorporation into society although their identity is affected by their residential experience.

I argue that my informants, with the help of others, manoeuvre and create their own position. They are therefore social and political revolutionaries as they assist to create their own view of themselves and a cultural ideology shaped by their 'Westindianness'. They are not intellectuals and they do not rule others only themselves. Intellectuals and leaders from the West Indian black community advocate on their behalf and assist their position. The elders' position appears to arise out of the crisis of modernity that emerged out of the problems of diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion policies of the state but they cannot resolve the crisis fully. I argue that they are 'set aside' because they are not powerful enough to affect the state structures and systems around them on a national level. They only become somewhat powerful within their level in the scheme and local community. They therefore occupy their micro place in the macro society. Even when returning to the West Indies as elders, they are always harbouring the polarities of inside and outside, transitional and resistant.

Nevertheless, in a small way they do affect the larger picture ultimately by influencing the very slow processes of change that the state allows. The operations at this scheme and the interface between my elderly informants and the state will undoubtedly influence future provisions for other migrants in their position. Nevertheless, many issues remain at the contested cultural boundary where their negotiations take place and provide a site of interest for my research.

## *Outsiders ?*

The fact that 'migration as wealth creation remains firmly rooted in the minds of the Caribbean people in the islands of origin' (Byron 2005:216) suggests the desire to attain economic power flows from the act of migration. However, I found that attaining wealth is not necessarily the outcome of migration for becoming part of a nation that is wealthier did not mean my informants too shared this great wealth for acquisition still remains a myth for them. Instead, I suggest, they have gained a sense of economic security by virtue of being recipients of earlier employment opportunities and the welfare state.

Although finding safety and security through state provisions, migration to England for my respondents creates complex difficulties, for the encounter was different to their expectations. Interestingly, Olwig (1998) highlighted disappointments found among Nevisians who migrated to England in the 1960s. Olwig found that most of them were 'rather negative' about their lives in England (1998:70). They felt let down by the 'colonial institutions of the church and the school' (1998:73) and employment, feeling as though they did not belong in Great Britain. My elderly respondents voiced a similar experience on their arrival and showed a continual engagement in negotiating their place in the society. Certainly, my research provides a micro-analysis of this continuing negotiating process in their elderly stage in life, as they settle into their place, some seeking it 'back home', others in England.

Indeed Blakemore and Boneham (1994), who undertook research in England amongst elderly West Indians, found issues of separation. They proposed that many suffered discrimination by state services in addition to experiencing isolation and alienation from kin members. No doubt, movement and resettlement affected this position, encapsulated in the term 'diaspora' that represents transitional movements through which people are displaced and become involved in constructing homes away from home. By focusing on the changes that occur through this process it is interesting to examine what remained, or is replaced, rejected or marginalized (Clifford 1994). I therefore uncovered how my informants negotiated their identity and culture to create a

residential place of belonging influenced by Bhabha's (1994) notion of the 'third space', a hybrid place of belonging that he suggests migrants occupy.

According to Bhabha (1994), the migrants become hybrid persons as they fuse their former and new cultural influences. Bhabha likens them to a bridge providing the reconciliation between two cultural forces. However, this is understood within the context of displacement and connection acting together (in Papasteriadis 2000:15). Papasteriadis cites Stuart Hall's comment that, 'world views interact with each other and are reworked, until the old ones are displaced' (Papasteriadis 2000:189). Nevertheless, I did not find such a clear demarcation, for my informants fused and held steadfast much of their 'Westindianness' that fuelled their views and cultural activities. Bhabha's (1994) concept of the 'third space', a term coined to describe the 'in-between' space created by the migrant as a result of his or her interface with the society they migrate to, was also useful to my understanding of their process and location, identity and placement. I agree that migrants occupy a particular place separate from mainstream society, one negotiated at the boundary where cultures meet. On the other hand, I find another dynamic is at play regarding those elders, who move to as well as in and out of the West Indies whilst maintaining or re-occupying residency in England that creates an interesting contribution to the position I advocate they occupy. Indeed, as a result of their movements they may remain transient oscillating between the two places, with long periods of residency in Britain that threatens their ultimate ability to return 'home'.

Of course, Britain's black communities have also 'forged a compound culture from disparate sources' (Gilroy 1993:15) so loyalty and identity are constantly being negotiated, creating issues around belonging and identity. Britain is part of their diaspora and is influenced by other black populations through music, books, ideas, and the spread of Rastafarianism among other elements, so the black culture is 'made and re-made adapting to local experiences' (Gilroy 1987:154). I found that my elderly respondents were engaged in adapting to global and local changes. They had to push past exclusions that kept them out of certain areas of housing and access to state services. They exerted their personal agency by creating a cultural challenge to the state provisions for the

black elderly as expressed in chapters 3, 6 and 7. They engage with state services that support them due to a gap arising in their needs that remained unmet elsewhere, but this interface led to confusions arising from the existing issues regarding ethnicity and cultural diversity. They therefore experience a paradoxical relationship to the state that I discuss in chapter 7.

Undeniably, the experience encountered by black people in Britain has been marred by discrimination and by physical and mental violence as well as racism. Gilroy suggests though that blacks are part of England and Englishness (1987) but racism has caused problems. Although they have contributed to English culture they have been afforded 'ambiguous assimilation... and specific forms of exclusion' (1987: 155). Subsequently they encounter both acceptance and hostility (Philips 1998). Similarly, Amin-Addo (1995) emphasised that migrants and their families living in Lewisham experienced incidents of attack from white Britons causing mistrust of the white British people, the British legal system, and other institutions. This led to collaborative efforts forming among the West Indian migrants in an attempt to mitigate discrimination. Consequently, the creation of Afro-Caribbean solidarity has developed in England. Although some migrants acquired English education, manners, dress, and speech pattern, they also developed a black identity resulting from racism. There are still racist attacks and murders so racism is still an issue in English society. Indeed, the recent Stephen Lawrence murder trial, investigation and findings have left mistrust within the Afro-Caribbean community towards the judiciary, a mistrust that permeates through to my elderly informants' local community, and resides within them.

The development of the Sheltered Housing Scheme in Lambeth is a product of such black solidarity and is a housing provision solely for black elderly people. The scheme developed in a period of racial unrest that fostered black solidarity in England. Many of my respondents lived in the local area in the early 1980s when there were two major riots fuelled by a mixture of social problems at that time. They were included in those found to be in need of help with housing and other support services. The local council re-housed some elderly informants found living in poor and inadequate housing before they eventually moved into



the scheme. Issues of inclusion, equal opportunities, and diversity have therefore become central to the modern provision of state services that support them.

I sought to ascertain how the elderly people feel about their development since moving into the scheme to find out how they fare in their local community. Useful here is Daugaard-Hanson's (2005) assessment of the influx of Chinese people into Belize regarding their incorporation and belonging, stating 'belonging to a community is framed as a matter of "dwelling"; their groundedness and their sense of a shared common and local history ... markers that make them belong there' (Daugaard-Hanson 2005:127). I found that my elderly respondents did have a connection to their host community and in the local community where their dwelling is situated, however, there were still misunderstandings and excluding issues that needed to be addressed daily. This community and issues contained within it provide the space in which my informants' negotiate their belonging. The groups they attend and the activities they partake in provide the social pathways in the local community that I explore in chapter 6, and serves to illuminate their strong sense of localised 'Westindianness'.

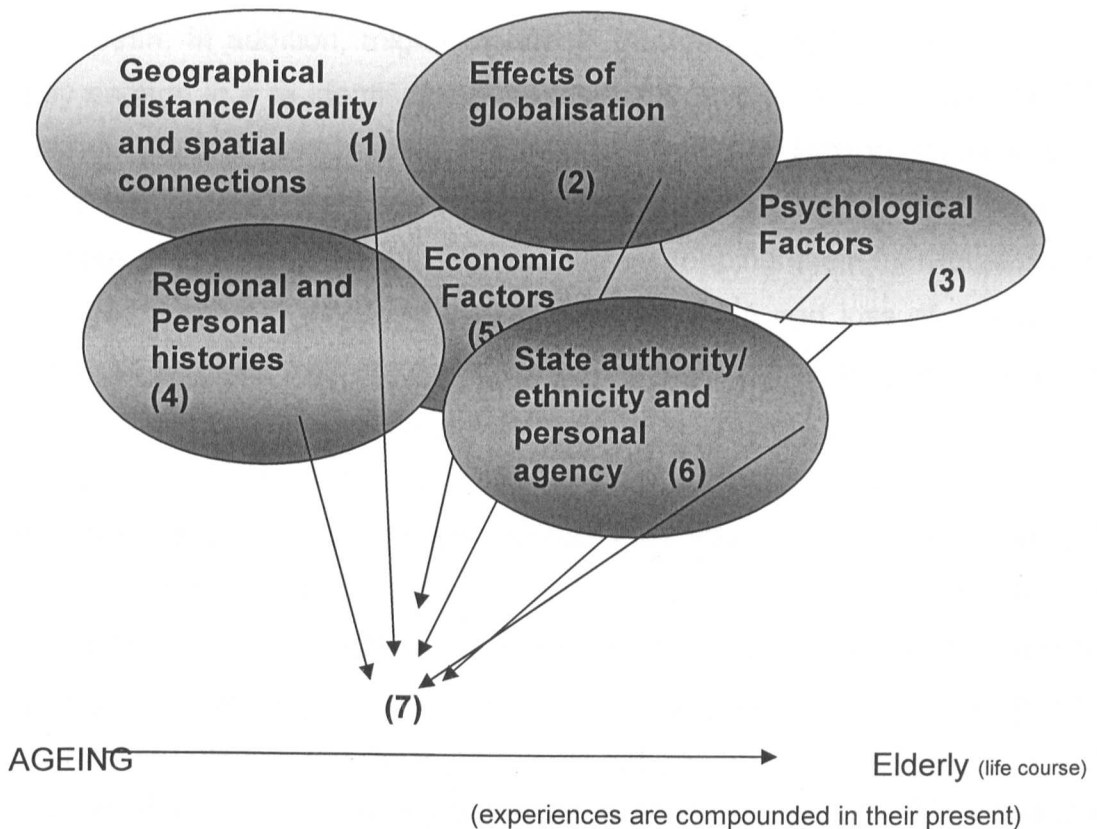
Therefore, the multi-dimensional nature of their belonging is paradoxical, for it is both inclusive and exclusive. Foner's (2001) research on migrants in New York found that migrants had a continuing strong connection with their country of origin in the Caribbean. They acquired an economic status that enabled them to have strong economic input back in the Caribbean at the same time establishing a firm place within American society. I find the contrary, due to the composition of my sample expressed earlier for in contrast my elderly respondents mostly did not gain such status and struggled to find a place in West Indian and British society, So although they reside in England and have a particular political alignment with it, they also experienced exclusions in certain areas. I therefore suggest further research concerning the position of other long-term working class West Indian migrants, who do not reside in such a scheme, would add to further anthropological knowledge in this area.

Finally, Olwig (2005) highlights an interesting set of contrasts between three different approaches applied to home and belonging that is important to my research: the integrationalist, transnational and diasporic. The integration of immigrants and their relationship to the sending and receiving societies is important because my informants negotiate belonging in Britain and to the West Indian island they came from, predominantly Jamaica. Olwig highlights a difference between the transnational and diasporic approaches, the transnationals view migrants as at home everywhere and those in the diaspora as at home nowhere (2005:191). I find my informants embroiled in this predicament.

To sum up, it is therefore important to put the sense of belonging of my research subjects into context. There is an interconnection between the major elements presented in this chapter. First, their family structure is prone to fragmentation because being affected by movement of family members. Secondly, my informants moved away from their families mostly out of an economic necessity but some moved due to personal tragedies. As a result the complex but thinly woven kin network that develops cannot support my elderly informants, because they mimic the fragmented family structure with their own offspring whilst becoming increasingly individually insular. They occupy single person households and rely heavily on the state for help economically, socially, and personally for their health care needs because they cannot maintain their well-being independently and their kin network cannot fully support them. Thirdly, because of this strong alliance with the state I suggest that it becomes a form of surrogate family. My elderly informants cannot sustain return to the Caribbean to live because of being away from it for a long time. However, they enjoy economic stability, as residents at the scheme and in England, finding their social status set by this position. I therefore suggest that their migratory desire is partially fulfilled through their interface with the state because they have achieved security in maintaining their well-being. This represents a major shift in the cultural practices of belonging formerly based on localised co-operation, linking kin through localised attachment to the family land as the source of economic and social stability. Instead, the state performs these functions and fills the gaps where needs arise that would otherwise be unmet.

*My assessment framework*

Influenced by the aforementioned assessment models and theories concerning migration, I employed a synthesis of these ideas and models to undertake my micro-analysis. Previous frameworks varied, being economic, historical and social. Similarly, I used a framework with these necessary components to examine the experiences of my informants by focusing on the cause and effect of migration, settlement patterns, personal agency, gender differentiations, economic influences, and contemporary global connectedness. My research framework enabled me to assess the past to understand the present, including local and distant influences. Figure 5, below, contains my integrated framework.



**Figure 5** *The integrated framework*

The seven categories comprising the components of this framework provide a process through which I synthesise my data. The seven components are (1)

geographical distance/locality and spatial connections, (2) effects of globalisation, (3) psychological factors, (4) regional and personal histories, (5) economic factors, (6) state authority/ethnicity and personal agency and finally (7) the ageing life course. This framework used for analysis and interpretation is influenced by the concepts of distance and spatial dynamics. Theories that discuss spatial relations at a distance, that result from economic migration locally and within the globalisation process, assist me in providing a frame of analysis concerning the effect of movement on the familial structure and connections between kin. My elderly respondents are part of this globalisation process, and the family structure is shaped by it as well as affecting their sense of belonging.

West Indian migratory culture developed through movement for work within the local and global operations of capitalism both within and outside of the Caribbean. In addition, migration affects the identity of the elderly people, as they engage in a re-identification process and develop a sense of belonging to England through establishing a sense of rooting in Brixton where they live. Their interface with the state services in the housing scheme where they reside satisfies their unmet needs and assists in shaping their individualism. This changed focus has occurred due to the loss of kin and loss of connection to home, so involves their emotions and psychological reasoning in the process of re-identification. My assessment framework is shaped by the concept of the migrant embarking on a journey in the diaspora. Here, the impact of experiences during the life cycle affects their journey. I include therefore the regional and personal histories that give rise to their family structure and migration patterns providing an understanding of their familial form and their history of movement in the pursuit of belonging. I use their historical background, similar to Foucault's (1991) application of history, by using it as a diagnostic tool of the present rather than solely seeing how the present has emerged from the past. Therefore there is not just a single lineal causal connection because I recognise the past is in the present (Kendall and Wickham 1999:4). I utilise my informants' genealogy charts as an access point to their past and present looking at the family structure of my respondents to uncover the connections, disconnections, and associated consequences.

I also include the economic factors that provided the original motivation to migrate and that confirm my informants' gender and class status position in society. Key to my analysis is the association and interplay between my elderly informants and the state as reflected in the title of this thesis. This brings out the agency and manoeuvring involved in their social and cultural transition as West Indian black elders. The geographical distance between the Caribbean, England and dispersed kin elsewhere inform the disconnections that arise from migration. I use relevant theories from the above categories of my framework to present and evaluate my data concerning the belonging of my informants in each chapter.

### *Conclusion*

I have provided a discussion of the main theoretical influences that assist me to explore my research aims in this chapter. I suggest my elderly informants' belonging is affected by their kinship structure and the act of migration. I therefore provided an explanation of their kinship structure and the cause and effect of migration that I suggest underpins the distance in their kin relations. I suggest kinship and migration are interrelated thus at the core of this thesis. The dream to find prosperity and increased social status through migration remains unfulfilled for my elderly informants remain poor and working-class. I further suggest that this causes a gap to form between them and their family members as they spend long periods apart so my elderly informants rely greatly on the state for their housing and to maintain their well-being. The high rate of relationship breakdown and divorce in the contemporary context causes fractured families, so I sought to explore the implications of this for my elderly respondents whose dependency on state services consequently deepen.

Interestingly, I found that my informants appeared to replicate the family forms proposed by early scholars such as Simey (Barrow 1996), Clarke (1999), Cumper (R.T. Smith 1990) and Davenport (1961) who found the family structure to be weak, brittle and unstable. My own data supports the work of R.T. Smith (1996), because there is gender differentiation. Men are often

absent from the household thus creating a tendency for female-headed households. I was keen to understand how this impacted on my informants as elderly people that would help me to understand how their family ties weakened in relation to gender and how this affects their sense of belonging.

Another important aspect of the kinship structure that influenced my research derives from the debate concerning family land. Besson (2002) and Olwig (2005) highlighted that the institution of family land played a symbolic role in the family. Besson maintains that the peasantry developed the institution of family land and they created a complex pattern of relations. This enabled belonging to kin and to a place to develop as well as the expression of personhood as it represented freedom after enslavement. Mainly, my informants from the rural communities were poor, some without family land. Indeed most stayed away from it and a few either return to visit family or unsuccessfully attempt return migration. So I am keen to explore the relationship my informants hold towards family land and assess how this affects their sense of belonging and placement in society. Solien (1959) drew attention to the process whereby people lost connection with family land and I am keen to understand how this detachment process occurs for my informants. Davenport's (1961) suggestion that there is a link between economic enfranchisement and the holding of family land for men suggests how men and women are positioned as elderly people in relation to family land. I am therefore keen to uncover the position of elderly men and women in my research in relation to matrifocality. My sample of working class people, reliant on the British state as a result of their class position, fragmented and loose kin ties provides interesting stories concerning detachment from home as they represent those referred to by Solien (1959) and Davenport (1961) above.

Wardle (1999) saw Jamaicans as multi-faceted actors who took on a creative role as they sought their freedom through travel. Wardle highlights that freedom is important, but, I ask, what would they be seeking freedom from if they were rooted to the land, thus, is there a contradiction or predicament highlighted here? Through my research findings it transpired that some links to family land remained but for the elderly people residing in the sheltered housing scheme

there also developed emotional and cultural bonds with local groups and people in Brixton. So, crucially important, is the realisation that the pattern of maintaining familial connections changed within the life course of my elderly respondent from the institution of family land to other institutions. This undoubtedly shapes their refocused belonging that I placed under investigation.

R.T. Smith (1988) and M.G. Smith (Barrow 1996, 1998) provide interesting thoughts in respect of the power of the working class family. Though differing in their perspectives they share the notion that its members are affected by their economically marginalised position in West Indian society. This marginalisation affected my elderly informants' family forms, aspirations and consequently created divisions between them that I explored. It is also suggested that there are differences found between West Indians based on notions concerning Christian morality that generates ideas concerning respect and the opposing ideas of reputation that can be obtained through illegal means (Wilson 1973). I was keen to understand how the elders lived together as a group and to find out if the influences from respect and reputation had changed for them through migration. I was keen to assess if they bonded together or if divisions affected their sense of belonging.

Undoubtedly, there were economic determinants motivating my informants to migrate. Chamberlain (2001) highlights the 'migration dynamic' as being historically rooted but not solely economically determined. By bringing out the relationship between movement and identity, I sought to explore and understand the individualism that, she suggests, manifests from migration.

Indeed, I was keen to explore my informants' position and placement in British society and to investigate how they affected their sense of place. I sought to uncover if my informants had any personal power to influence their life circumstances through their interface with the state. Gramsci's (1990) notion of counter-hegemonic challenges to the state system by individuals and intellectuals affecting power relations in society through their collective personal agency is applicable in the context of my research. This is because as West Indians and as elderly black people they strive to maintain their ethnic and

cultural identity. Boundaries were pushed on my informants' behalf which enabled them to assert their identity that also affected their belonging. In addition, Bhabha's (1994) notion of the third space, used to describe the hybrid in-between space that forms from migration, is useful to assist the interpretation of my informants' negotiation of belonging as long-term migrants in Britain.

Gilroy's (1993) use of the term diaspora applied the concept of journeying and the meeting of cultures to explain the migratory experience. His notion of the 'contact zone' brought in a modern view of space, taking it outside of the localised gaze in specific countries to seeing a complex global link affecting local relations between West Indian migrants. This influences my internal and external gaze, as I seek connections, cause, and effect of migration trans-nationally in the diaspora that affects my elderly informants.

In addition, Crichlow (1994) suggests the rigid institutional-structural approach regarding family land tenure is more complex and ambiguous. Crichlow (1995) also stated that Besson (1979) devised her theory of the institution of family land using the plantation paradigm, ignoring the full historical process regarding development that placed an emphasis on the plantation more than the family as the critical institution. In reply, Besson (2007) highlights inconsistencies in Crichlow's critique of Mintz, Trouillot and Besson's work and Crichlow's suggestion that they applied an oversimplified interpretative approach. In response to the aforementioned concerns relating to the family my research also focuses on the family as the critical institution affecting citizenship and belonging that will contribute further to the approach concerning personhood, citizenship, power, and belonging and engagement with place through property rights. In addition, I acknowledge Trouillot, who advocated using a new paradigm that could assess the effect of changes resulting from creolisation, using concepts referring to time and space; this has been used by scholars in recent work (such as Besson and Olwig 2005), that I too adopt.

I have thereby attempted to respond to these critiques. My research is therefore multi-dimensional considering recent influences made by various scholars regarding belonging among those studying migrant groups. Their influences



have contributed to my lines of enquiry, and ultimately to my contribution to theory and practice through my applied framework, emerging themes and conclusions concerning long-term West Indian migrants regarding their placement and belonging.

## Chapter 3

### **Elderhood and black sheltered housing**

#### Introduction

'I wish I was elderly sooner.'

The above quote from Mr. Smith shows his welcoming attitude towards being older. He says that he is not offended by the term 'elderly' but welcomed this stage in life because it brought retirement from work. He is still active and asserts, 'I am healthy and strong and can still have sex'. Mr. Smith is in his sixties and the concept of being elderly does not affect his overall view of himself. Although this view is not unique, other respondents engage with being elderly in different ways that unfold throughout this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it serves to highlight how West Indian elderly people are conceptualised in British society in the context of general elderhood and as black elders in the sheltered housing, a specialised service for elderly people. I also assess the influence concerning notions of elderhood from the West Indian perspective. Secondly, I outline my informants' position as elders. Through probing into views of ageism, assessing their interaction with their families, the local community and the state interesting themes emerge that inform their position as elderly citizens.

#### *The complexities of old age*

Anthea Tinker (1984) suggests the definition of elderly refers to those over the age of retirement, although there are variations due to the lack of a generally agreed definition of the term. I find the retirement age a useful benchmark, so I acknowledge this definition in my research because it provides a marker at the end of the migrants' dream to acquire funds to enhance their life chances and signifies a retirement into receiving the benefits of their labour. The sheltered housing scheme accepts people the age of 55, so I also acknowledge this as a

marker of the elderly status for my informants. Retirement therefore represents an important phase as elderly people settle into another part of the life cycle that brings forth new meanings, adaptations and relationships. The retirement phase therefore provides a stage within the life cycle from which I draw anthropological insights.

The concept of old age is categorised and associated with life and death. However, the social construction of ageing disguises the undercurrent of fear and anxiety surrounding the process (Hazan 1994). Nonetheless, Hazan asserts that the cultural conception of old harbours inconsistencies and incongruities, as ageing embodies paradoxical images that the old hold of themselves. Nevertheless, Hazan suggests the multiple realities experienced by the elderly and the diversity of socio-cultural lifestyles makes a unified theoretical approach misleading. He therefore proposes that knowledge produced concerning the elderly is multifaceted because it comprises beliefs, attitudes and conceptions that reflect their changing personal needs. I also found differing responses to ageing amongst my informants based on their socio-cultural lifestyle.

#### *Specific black elderly housing provision*

However, Thompson (1995) asserts that older people continue to play a greater role in social institutions and act as Carers for both other elderly folk and younger members of the community. They are consequently active in a range of leisure and educational activities. My elderly informants are socially active to varying degrees and engage in community activities, performing different functions. Some of the activities they found by themselves as they continue their life long interests such as dominoes playing, church going, or taking education courses as well helping others through childminding. Others engage in pursuits organised by the state specifically for the black elderly, such as their attendance at Day Centres that I further investigate in chapters 5 and 6.

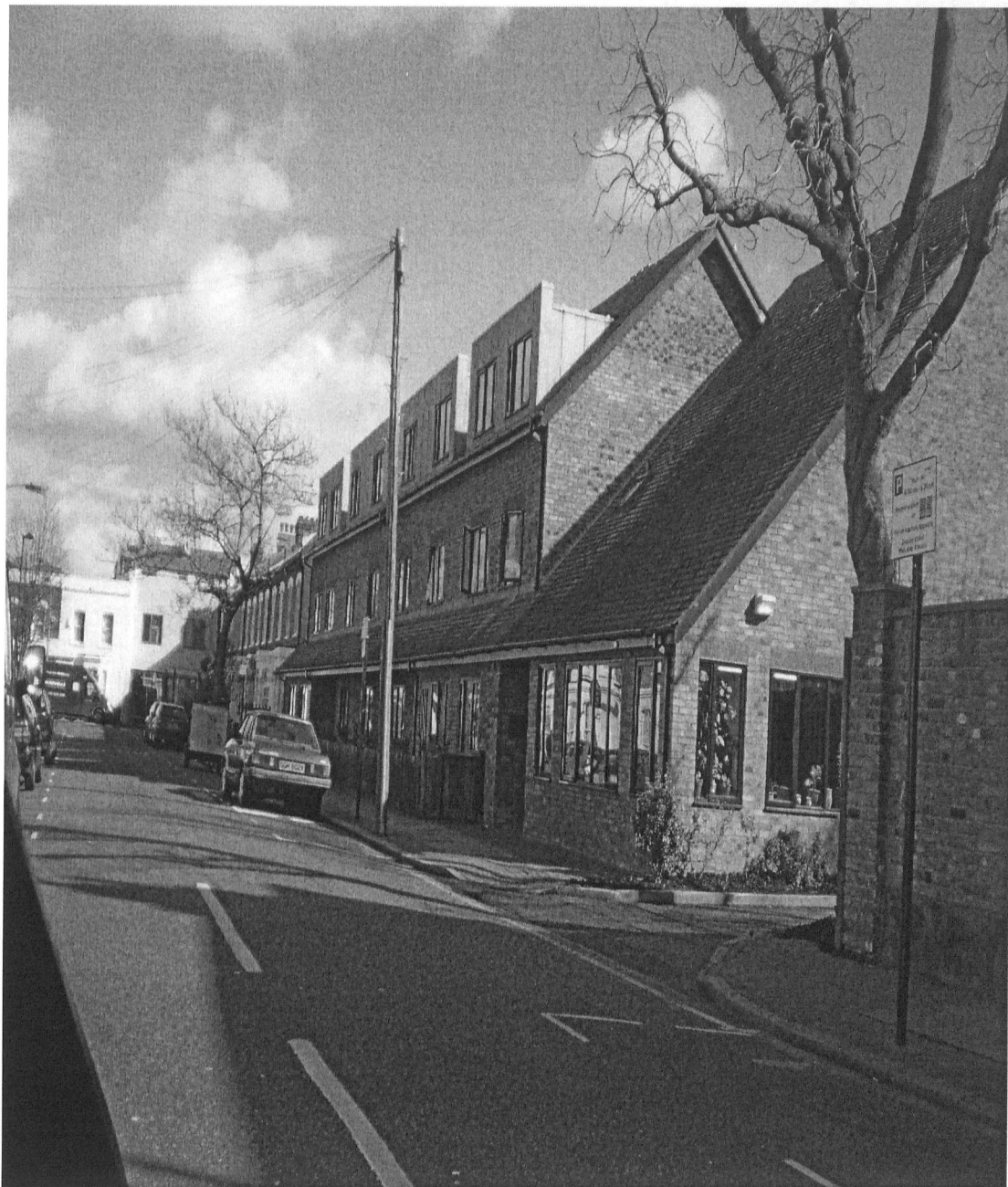
In the context of my research, the sheltered housing accommodation, where my informants live, is designed similar to mainstream provisions. Except the

designated habitants are black elderly people with the staff reflecting similar ethnicity and culture. This black Minority Ethnic (BME)<sup>16</sup> equal opportunities service provision is therefore a specialised scheme. The sheltered housing service helps elderly inhabitants cope with the ageing process, discrimination and the difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities when trying to access support services (Thomas and Page 1999). I acknowledge that Chakrabarti (cited in Thompson 1995) suggests policy formations had not seriously considered the rise in ethnic minority elders that were at 6% of the black population, neither the impact of racism, ageism and marginalisation (1995:16-17) on them. However, I currently find a response with the provision of this service, although problems exist with the ethos and policies.

The development of the scheme emerged within social housing services that provide housing and support to homeless and vulnerable elderly people whom the state seeks to protect. The Metropolitan Housing Trust (MHT) already provided housing to ex-servicemen from the West Indies and became involved in wider social housing provision that grew in the 1980s. The development of this sheltered housing scheme occurred when they joined forces with the Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association (BNCA) and opened the service in 1986. Consequently, MHT receives funds from the government to manage the building and the services it provides in co-ordination with other statutory services and local organisations. The scheme therefore comprises of two buildings, each with gardens, individual flats, communal catering and socialising facilities, on-site Scheme Managers and integrated support and care services. Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9 depict one of the two buildings, the opening plaque and communal facilities.

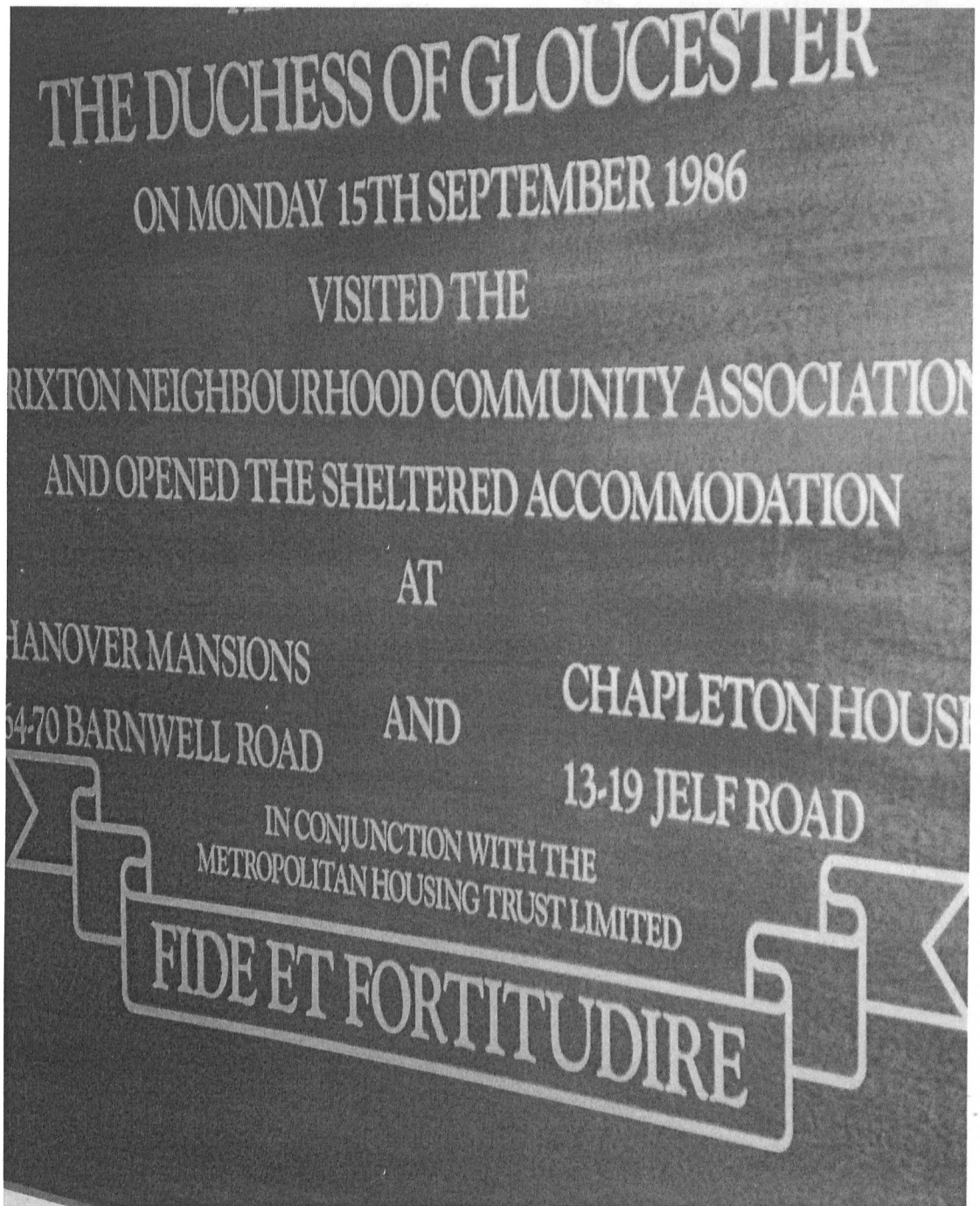
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<sup>16</sup> BME refers to Black Minority Ethnic service provisions. This contemporary term used within the ever-changing equal opportunities industry. The service is regulated under the Race Relations Act 1976 and subsequent amendments.



**Figure 6**

*One of the two sheltered housing scheme buildings*



**Figure 7**

*Opening commemorative plaque*



**Figure 8**      *The communal laundry in the sheltered housing scheme*



**Figure 9**      *The communal kitchen in the sheltered housing scheme*

Indeed the 1990 National Service and Community Care Act greatly impacts state services for the elderly by creating the co-ordination of integrated care

provision. These provisions became available to people in their homes in the community and in sheltered housing schemes. According to Roberts (1993), the purpose and design of sheltered housing, sometimes referred to as housing with care, is to give the occupants secure independence and to develop a community spirit<sup>17</sup>. This specialised built environment therefore reflects age and identity (Laws 1997).

The specific design of a sheltered housing scheme applies to this scheme. This design mirrors that of the 'panoptican' metaphor that links space and power relations (Lyon 1993:656). This metaphorical description of state institutions and social relation created by Jeremy Bentham, was applied to the assessment of surveillance in social spaces by Foucault (cited in Lyon 1993). Influenced by these debates I therefore suggest that the residents of the sheltered housing scheme are under surveillance to make them more manageable in order to administer social care. However, this model utilises surveillance in a positive way, rather than solely being a means to control. Indeed, as Lyon states, 'too few social theorists take us beyond the fears, threats, suspicion and constraints of the panoptican to consider the place of love, care, trust and enabling within surveillance systems' (1993:675). Clearly, there is the intention that residents will live their lives in their individual flats and form part of the community in the housing complex.

Central figures to the running of the scheme are the residential Scheme Managers who work closely with the residents, co-ordinate some of the communal social events and ensure building maintenance requirements are met. The Scheme Managers are key figures because they ensure that the support service provided is in accordance with the current policies under the Supporting People programme<sup>18</sup>. Figure 10 provides a graphic view of how the scheme's housing service integrates with other services available to my elderly informants. The flow diagram shows service options from the point of moving

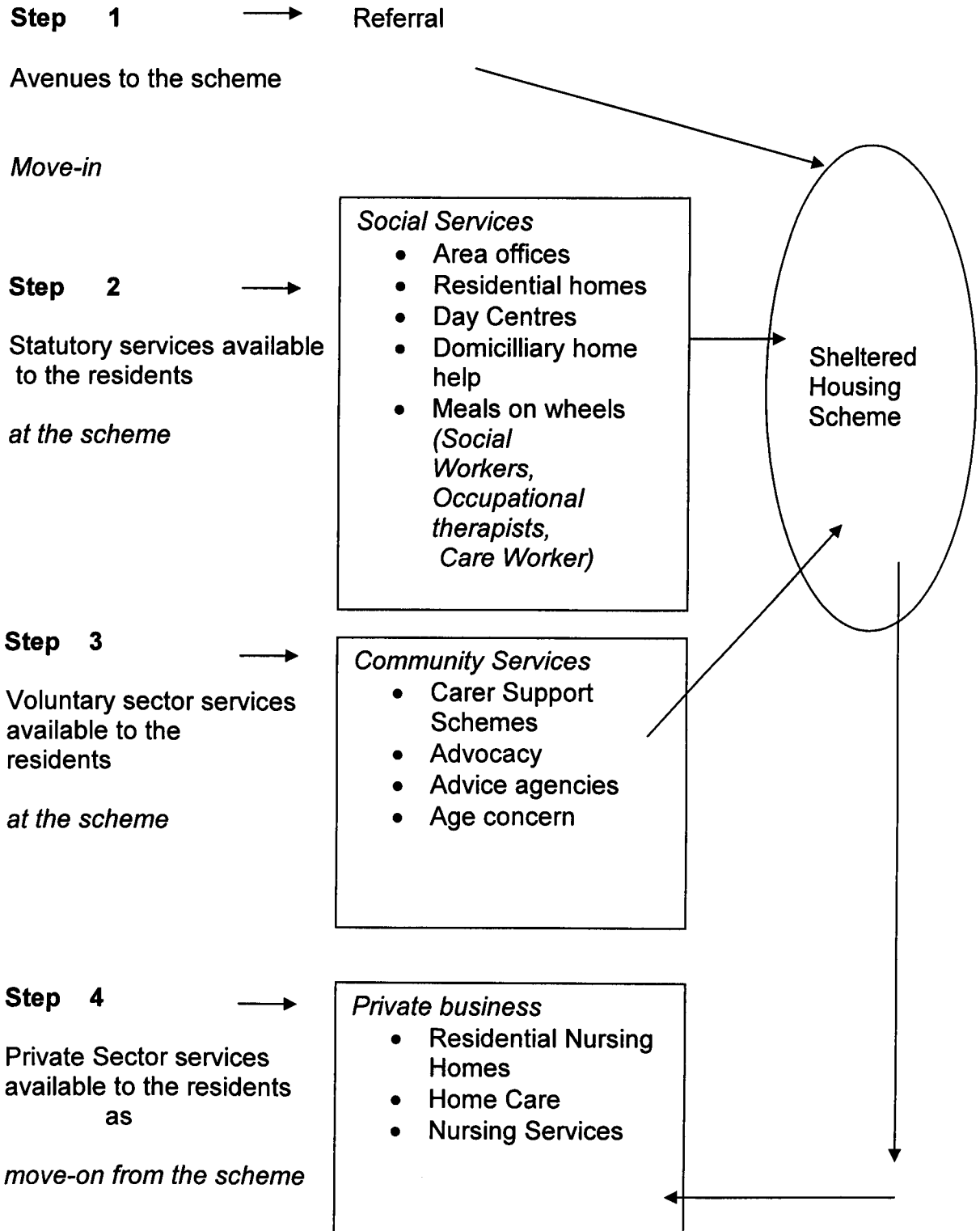
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<sup>17</sup> This refers to ensuring people engage in social interactions with each other that are cordial and inviting, so that people feel included in their social environment. Social gatherings and interactions in the scheme and in the community are further discussed in chapter 6.

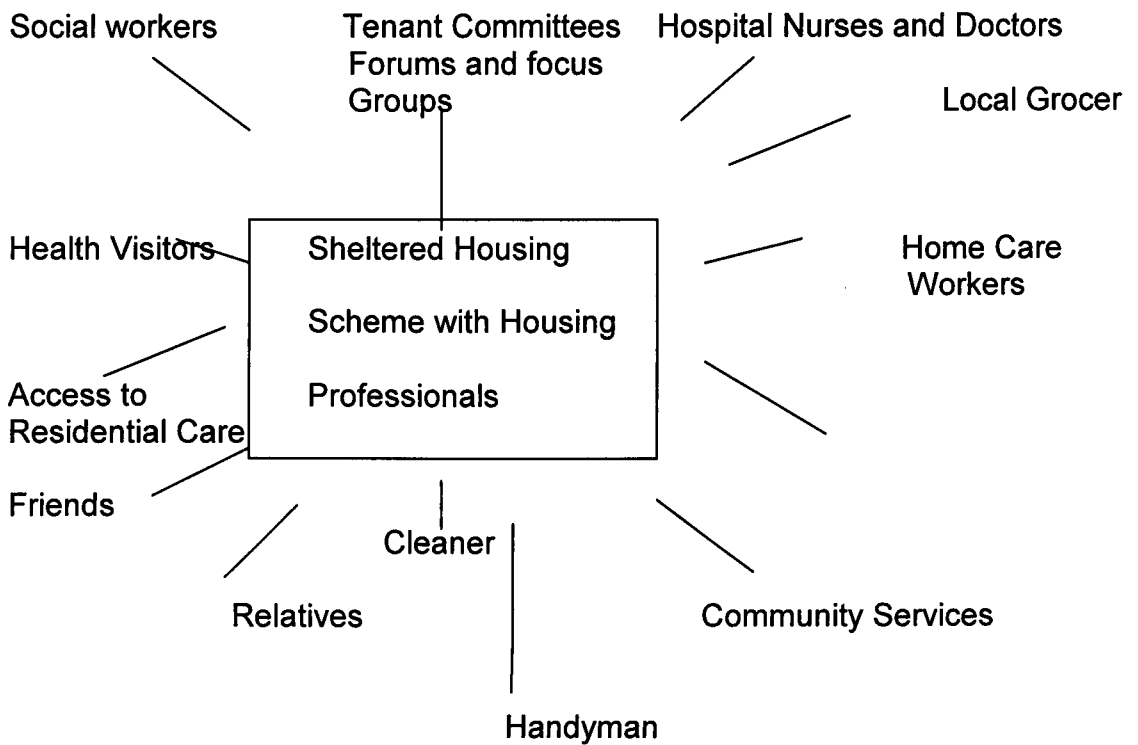
<sup>18</sup> Supporting people is a government strategy that provides funding and regulates the provision of services to people in a supported housing environment.



into the scheme. For example, some of my elderly informants receive a variety of services because they have diverse health and social needs. Such as, Mr. Griffiths who has several professionals engaged in the assessment and provision of assistance that he requires to meet his needs. Hence, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Community Psychiatric Nurse, Doctors and Consultants assist him due to his multiple needs that include both mental disability and physical health problems. His complex needs addressed by various state services ensure his housing as well as social and health needs are met. Similarly, my other informants receive a variety of joined up services to help them. Figure 11 therefore depicts the variety of professionals and services involved in their lives, while Figure 12 shows the layout of one of the buildings in the scheme.

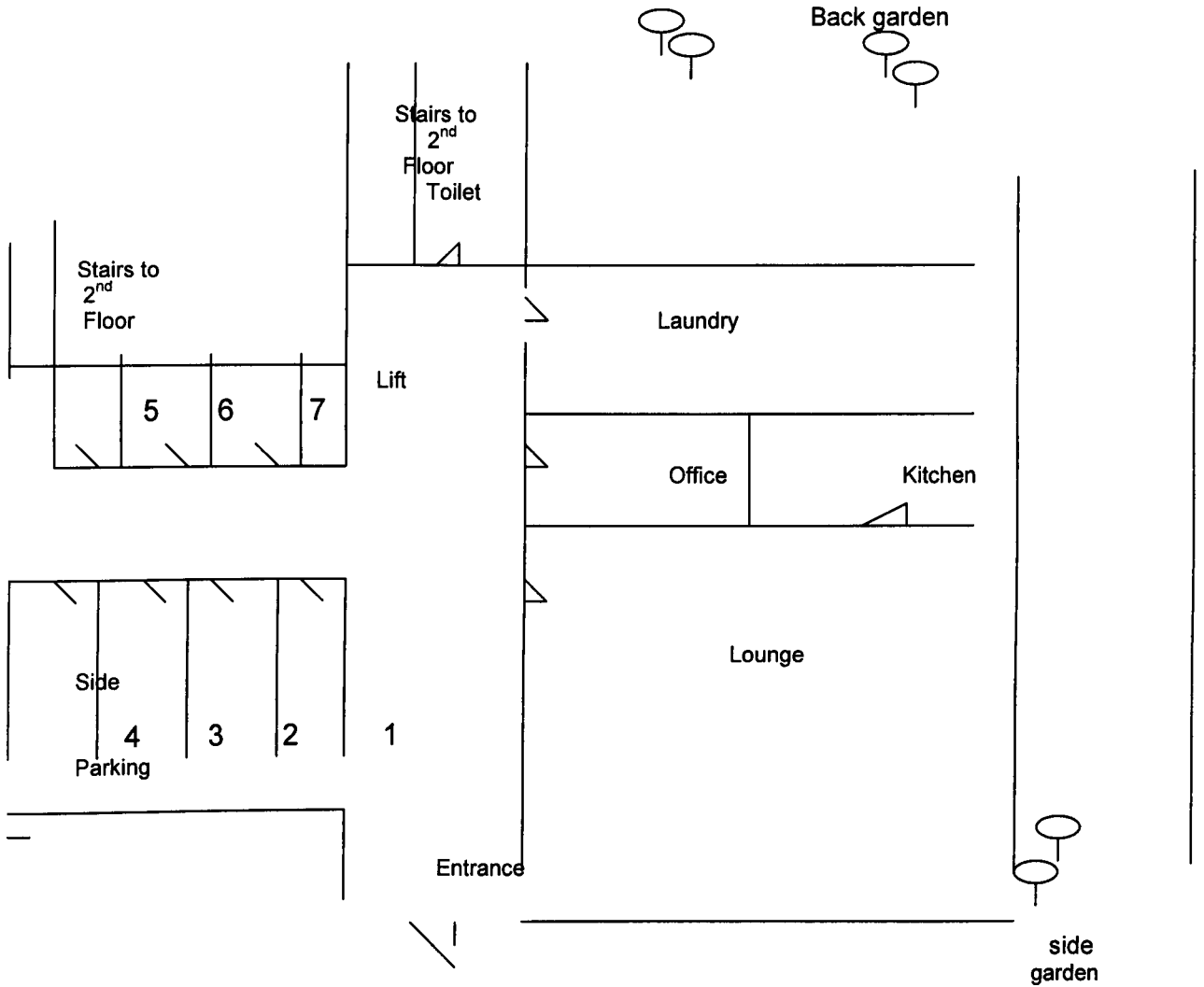


**Figure 10** *The integration of services at the sheltered housing scheme*

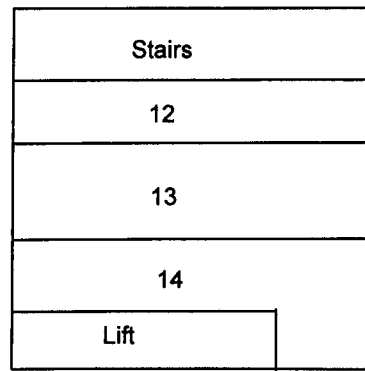
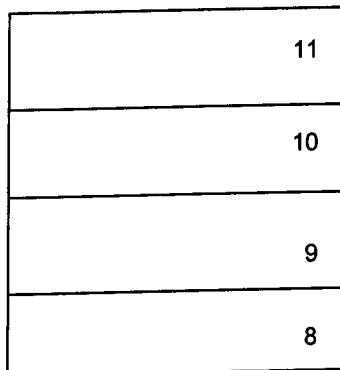


**Figure 11** *The professional services provided at the sheltered housing scheme*

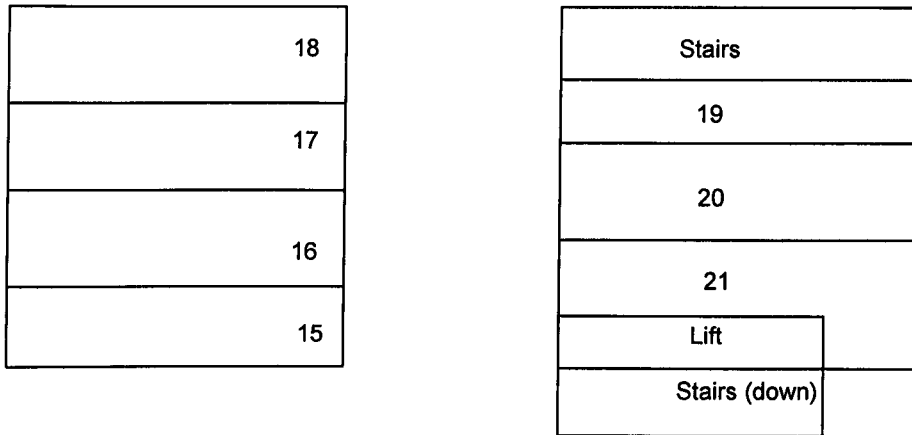
Ground Floor



Second Floor



### Third Floor



**Figure 12**     *The sheltered housing scheme layout (This is not to scale)  
(The flats are numbered)*

#### *Mitigating the exclusion of black elders*

The social inclusion ethos seeks to ensure a more inclusive society. Therefore integrated services are available to people who suffer from a combination of linked problems, such as, low incomes, poor housing, ill health and family breakdown, 'where people have been excluded from the "normal" practices of modern society' (Percy-Smith 2000:3). Therefore by providing 'joined-up solutions to joined-up problems' (Social Exclusion Unit 2001) the government aims to 'develop integrated and sustainable approaches' (Percy-Smith 2000:2) so that the state can provide the 'opportunity for all' in need to be supported (Percy-Smith 2000:3). Therefore, the ultimate attainment is to prevent social exclusion by promoting social inclusion. Percy-Smith also suggests that the idea of social exclusion connects to the global market where new people enter England and face long-term disadvantage, due to their differences, like my informants. Social inclusion theories indicate, through law and local policy, types of provisions that should be available within the community to meet the personal and social needs of persons deemed to be vulnerable or disadvantaged. The aim is to ensure that people are included in mainstream

society and not marginalized due to poverty, age, health, drug addiction and other issues.

This strategy attempts to fulfil the desire of the government to create a more inclusive society. Social inclusion approaches therefore personify a set of social processes to re-balance discriminatory exclusions through making structural changes. By virtue of being in the housing scheme, my elderly migrants are included in this process and accepted as socially excluded. They are therefore recipients of state services provided to address their social and personal needs that also strive to include them into mainstream society.

### *Elderhood in the West Indian context*

My informants' heritage and social environment also influences the conceptualisation of their elderly status. It is therefore important to understand how the West Indian notion of elderhood impacts on them. Certainly Stevenson, citing McCullough, argues that psychological changes in old people can be best understood by 'reference to social rather than developmental forces', that is to say change in an individual may occur as a result of ... interaction between internal and environmental factors' (1989:6). In this respect, I propose that social interactions, memory and beliefs also affect my informants and influence their ageing process. Thus, the cumulative effect of life course events through the various experiences they encountered affects their views of elderhood as well as their elderly quality of life, social engagement, familial reciprocity and the help received from others. Further, in agreement with Amoss and Harrell (1981), I found their elderly status also assigned by class and gender.

I also argue that the elderly people in my research are individuals but have a similar developmental experience as they share a similar cultural background and migratory experience. Their personal views on elderliness differ but mirror the variations found within their culture. My informants therefore engage in negotiating a position in society through a process of adjustments.

Although immersed in life in England, I found that my elderly informants share a West Indian heritage and embody notions of elderliness that they experienced whilst living in Jamaica and other places in the West Indies, where the social position of elders in society determined their definition of elderhood. Clarke's (1999) inquiry into family relations in the 1950s provides an insight into the notion of elderhood that some of the elderly respondents experienced in their family through their parents and grandparents and in their communities which affects their current views and expectations. Clarke found an established role where the grandmother was influential in bringing up her daughter's children, often playing the role as mother. Women often possessed land that to be inherited, so were seen as a source of security to mitigate homelessness for family members and once deceased provided a future base for their close kin.

Research undertaken by Davenport (1961) among poor rural folk in Jamaica also indicated that, due to economic and social conditions, a household pattern emerged within which women played a vital role in nurturing children and grandchildren. He therefore identified gendered differences among the elderly. Davenport found that men usually married later in life after achieving both economic and relationship stability that enabled them and look after ageing parents or other close relatives within their household. For that reason marriage and kinship responsibilities developed creating reciprocal obligations towards men when old and dependent. My informants also showed different responses to ageing in relation to their relationships with their children and other people that served to highlight the gender differences, outlined in chapter 5.

Certainly, in the West Indies, a younger member of the family might reside with the elderly person. Indeed, more recently Chevannes (2001) in Jamaica, Barrow (1998) in Barbados and Reynolds (2005) in England, found similar roles played out by elderly women as highlighted above. However, things are very different for my elderly informants at present because they do not have a home of their own, are residentially separated from kin and, in the main, and even those with family land are unable to return to it for practical reasons which are uncovered in chapter 4. As a result, they cannot continue the culture of passing

homes on to younger family members. Instead, they reside in England and live in accommodation owned by the state in the form of flats within the sheltered housing complex which cannot be inherited by family members. They therefore no longer have the powerful status to pass on land and keep kinship bonds rooted to a place but are stripped of this so experience a position of decreased power and status as working-class elders.

Nevertheless, I found women and one man engaged in helping with childcare and maintaining ties with children. Surprisingly, some elderly people held the view that as elders they would receive more help in Jamaica than in England, influenced by their earlier life experiences. This is a romanticised speculative thought because it is unknown how their elderliness might be experienced had they had stayed in Jamaica. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jarvis says that in Jamaica 'the family help you, not over here, they help themselves, dem no business wid you.'<sup>19</sup> She remarks of her children that they 'ask from me, dem no give me, all a dem bad'.<sup>20</sup> This is a rather dubious statement because I witnessed her daughter and grandchildren as supportive, loving and helpful to her. Perhaps her mental health affects some of these statements and perhaps both aspects are true, but the latter appears most plausible. Moreover, perhaps she feels uncertain about her status and this makes her dubious of others, and help and positive reciprocity difficult, a position that others in her situation occupy.

To sum up, concerning the first part of this chapter regarding how my informants as West Indian elderly migrants are conceptualised in British society, I propose that overall they share a heterogeneous conceptualisation similar to other elders in British society. Nevertheless, their class and heritage affects their identity and status as citizens. Undeniably, their conceptualisation determined by their ethnicity places them as different. However, this difference is accepted, whilst attempts are made to simultaneously integrate them within society through the initiative concerned with valuing diversity and their ethnic identity. Nonetheless, I suggest that a paradox develops because although they desire inclusion into British society successful integration remains problematic

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<sup>19</sup> They are not interested or bothered with you

<sup>20</sup> Her children ask her for things but do not give her things, so she says that they are all bad.



as their differences set them aside. I further explore this aspect in chapters 6 and 7.

Consequently, as unfolds below my informants occupy a position affected by class, gender, cultural influences and their British experience. This fusion is evident in their personal views towards their elderly status and other elders, through their engagement and relationships with younger people, their family, community and the state.

### *Ageism and a preference for younger people*

Paradoxically some elders are prejudiced towards other elders and practice ageism. However, those who held such views were elders denied firm status as important and powerful people in their families. Similarly, fellow elders in the scheme queried their status. Such elders marginalized in their families, found respect and firmer elderhood status among younger friends in the community. Through assessing their views on other elderly people a preference for the company of younger people became apparent among some men. Interestingly, Mr. Bailey, who is quite isolated from his locally based family and has loose connections to his children who live overseas, told me,

'I recognise that I am an elderly man but life goes on. We have to accommodate ourselves to the movements. I would like the company of a female partner but I would not want a woman of my age because she would be no use to me. A younger woman is best because she would also look after me and if I had a younger woman it would be natural, and inevitable, that she would have younger male lovers but I would accept this as long as she was discreet. I would make this allowance because I know that she could be with a younger man and I would be lucky to find a younger woman to take an interest in me'.

Mr. Bailey therefore took a second-class view of himself in relation to women and younger men. This, I suggest is a response to being older and not finding a position of leadership and respect as further illustrated below.

For even when health is failing and mobility is poor, an elderly man in his 70's holds ambivalence towards ageing and continued relationships with much younger women, further extending his family by having more children. Mr. Earles told me of his preference.

'I am 75 years old and I am sick. I am very ill. I can't walk very well and I use the Zimmer frame to help me walk and my back is giving me hell because I have chronic arthritis that struck me down a year ago. So my movements are restricted. I cannot move very fast nor go out without help because I need to sit in the wheelchair. I use to be strong when I was younger, working on building sites. Now I can hardly walk. But I still want a woman, I am still a man.

I have been married three times so I am in my third marriage now. My recent wife is still in Jamaica, she is in her early forties now. I only like younger women and I prefer them.'

He spends a lot of time in hospital receiving medical treatment and is often drowsy due to the medication he takes. Nevertheless, he tells me that he is 'looking someone' because he would like to have a relationship now with a woman, although he is married but estranged from his wife.

Further, he showed desire for women through the advances he made to me. My field notes state, he can be very forward, without welcome, and tried to touch me whenever he could and propositioned me as he did the Cleaner who informed me of his unwelcome advances to her. Maybe he also did this to his Carer from the coolness I observed her showing him. Whilst I was interviewing him he was constantly trying to touch my leg, pull his body close to me and generally tried to touch me as I sat next to him. Although I kept moving away, quite obviously, he kept trying to pull himself close to me. He propositioned me in a confident manner with a self-assurance that expected I would have relations with him. He continued to ask me if I 'have someone', I replied 'yes', he responded, 'that doesn't matter'. I said, 'it matters to me!' He replied, 'that is

good', with ambivalence. However, he continued, 'so you don't fancy me?' This 'merry dance' continued between us and although I erected a boundary, he refused to recognise it, I therefore manoeuvred around his advances.

The Scheme Manager saw this when she passed us talking, she and I would raise our eyebrows together regarding his behaviour that I think this was an acknowledgement of our acceptance of this disrespectful behaviour. (This interpretation is judgemental and directed towards his behaviour, rather than condemnation of him).

Alternatively, although Mr. James seeks the company of younger people he tells me that he does not 'fool around with women'. (I wonder if this statement is true or if he is telling me this to appear respectable). Nonetheless, he highlights another example where an elder is closer to younger people and has more in common with them than those of his own age. Importantly, Davenport (1961) also demonstrated the developmental traits of maturation and ageing between young and old males that I find useful here. He highlighted that full adult status was highly determined by economic security that allowed males to head their own household otherwise others assumed some of their obligations. Older men and those in their early twenties therefore received equal economic status if they were economically sound, although younger men retained respect for older men.

I found a similar bond but conversely it did not depend on economic security but on a similar social status. For of my respondents had been married but there was a high rate of divorce and separation, subsequently most men became estranged from their children and families. I therefore found that such older men grew closer to younger men similarly socially positioned who respected them.

Mr. James reflected on his position. He highlighted his independence and individuality because he has been fending for himself for most of his life therefore as an elderly man his independence compounded. Maintaining his old established style of socialising fixed him in the companionship of younger

people who frequented his social spaces. Mr. James, a slender man, of medium height, balding with a trendy ponytail, told me,

'I am 86 years old and I am very independent. I like to be independent because I do not want to be a bother to anyone. I am a crab because I am a loner who moves around, sits quiet and watches. When chased the crab runs and hides until it finds solace and I am like that. I was bought up by friends of my mother because she died when I was very young. I went to Cuba with them for a few years but on return to Jamaica, at twelve years old, I left them and started to fend for myself. I became very street-wise.

I married young in Jamaica to my wife who I met in Kingston. We lived in her parents' house for a short while then travelled to England together. She died in 1962 from cancer.

I am a quiet and private person and I am also a thoughtful man, for example, my health improved after my medication. I felt that my doctor had listened to me and helped him so I went back to see my doctor to thank him and gave him a small gift. He did a good deed so I gave him the gift to say thanks and because I know the doctor will feel good hearing the thanks and receiving the gift. I know how nice I feel to hear nice things and wanted to give the doctor this experience and show my gratitude.

I am 'proud' to be as old as I am and I have learnt a lot from my life experiences. Though I am independent as a safeguard, I keep my mobile phone close to me because I have the contact numbers for my children in case I have any problems and need them in an emergency. I have experienced a lot of loss and pain in my life but I struggle through and give God thanks all the same. I am still very able and I have passed my recent driving test, so I have a valid driving licence that I kept going after I retired from work as a school

bus driver. I also get a work pension as well as a state pension, so I am fine.

I make sure I practice living good<sup>21</sup> as a way of life because living this way has helped me to survive this long. I have had strength and reasonably good health throughout my life until lately because I am now having severe back pains and some problems breathing, so I am having a lot of tests at the hospital for them.

I enjoy smoking marijuana and struggle to give up smoking although the doctor tells me that I must give it up. My weed<sup>22</sup> supplier was raided so he is unable to supply weed to me. I am now concerned where to get good trustworthy weed from. I move around with young people,<sup>23</sup> because I prefer their company and they respect me. I have gained a sense of friendship, love, and belonging from such friends.

I go to a local café where I gamble downstairs with the other men who go there. There are people of all ages. Upstairs food is served and there is a bar. Downstairs we play card games, dominoes and watch television together. I gamble my money' but I also save some money. I sometimes gamble £600, £400 etcetera in card games. Recently after a stabbing, a man died so the café closed down for a few months so I did not go out much as a result.

I describe myself as a 'rude boy'<sup>24</sup>. But, I feel unsafe about walking home late at night because anything could happen to me because someone may pick on me as an easy target. I am concerned for my safety at night when I leave the café so I will get a cab home or one of my friends will take me home in their car. In order to protect myself

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<sup>21</sup> I like to live in harmony with others.

<sup>22</sup> The drug marijuana.

<sup>23</sup> I socialise with young people.

<sup>24</sup> A man who is streetwise.

I carry a small pocket file and knife in case I am attacked or anyone bothers me. I am ready for them though<sup>25</sup>, see my knife here<sup>26</sup>.

I am more concerned for my safety now because Brixton has changed much over the years. Many new people have moved into the area including 'yardies',<sup>27</sup> who have newly arrived from Jamaica, some are horrible people and I have to consider that I am on my own.'

Mr. James made it clear that he has gained a sense of 'friendship, love, respect and belonging from his friends'. He says that they refer to him as 'big man' even some of the yardies that go to the café refer to him using this term. He is called 'Dad' and 'Pops' by the younger men. This he takes as a mark of respect, honouring his elderhood. He tells me a story of a time when he was in the café and whilst socialising a younger man with dreadlocks approached him and took his tam<sup>28</sup> off his head, flashed his dreadlocks and said, 'I respect you', to Mr. James. He said that he felt good because his age was respected and he was welcomed so felt that he belonged with them. However, he remarks that his relationship with his own children distanced because of experiences in the past when they were younger and he does not experience such feelings with them.

I found Mr. James to be very friendly but he admitted to me that I was fortunate to engage him in my research for he said to me, 'I don't usually tell people my business, you are lucky'. (I was also aware that he would not tell me his whole business but a censored part of it). Whenever I went to see Mr. James, he would be very hospitable and welcoming to me. When we first met, mid afternoon, he offered me a drink of rum. After he became more used to me, he said to me, 'help yourself to a drink, you are not a stranger here'. He is warm, charming and witty. He reiterated that he is a faithful man and since his wife

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<sup>25</sup> As he was telling me this he produced his pocket knife and gesticulated to me through his actions his readiness to retaliate if attacked.

<sup>26</sup> Mr. James shows me how he would defend himself by flicking open the knife he takes out with him.

<sup>27</sup> The term used to describe criminals from Jamaica.

<sup>28</sup> A woven hat made from wool.

died he has not set up home with another woman but remained living alone. I accept this comment but cannot believe his sobriety.

I certainly found that these elderly people made personal choices about their elderly identity. Interestingly Csordas (2003:179) suggested that elderly people created their own meaning of their elderhood as their ageing is fluid rather than bound by fixed stages, therefore one's look and feel may conflict with one's biological and chronological age (Csordas 2003:179). Similarly, I uncovered that the elderly people often acted as they felt and desired rather than their chronological age setting specific boundaries to their courses of action.

### *Different approaches to elderhood*

As stated above the approach to elderliness from my respondents are varied. Some who experience ill health and suffer from various ailments are conscious that their bodies are very different and are slowing down, so they make allowances for this in their activities. For example, Mr. Baker states that he respects age and is aware of his body and the limitations that this poses on him and his activities. Consequently, he says that he does not 'push his body beyond its boundaries' as he listens to his tiredness, aches and pains and rests accordingly. Whilst others, like Mr. Smith, in my opening quotation to this chapter, show they respond to their life challenges with similar vigour to when younger because they are still physically and mentally able to do so and feeling fit takes away a negative focus on ageing. Conversely, as highlighted above ill-health does not necessarily curtail their expectations and social behaviours.

The family is an important institution that gives insight into the status and position of elders in a society. My elderly informants have differing engagements with their family. Some of these experiences are supportive whilst others are quite painful. Thus views of elderhood are intertwined into their reflections on relationships with family members and the reciprocity encountered. In chapter 5, I explore gender and kinship and provide fuller details of their kin relationships.

In addition, although elderliness heralds a final stage, it is not just about the demise of life for my informants embrace life whilst they still have it. It is not necessarily seen as an inactive stage but one in which they continue to grow and acknowledge their worth to society. Still, there are differing views differentiated by gender as highlighted by Mrs. Evans and Mr. Taylor below.

Mrs. Evans captures the essence of firm placement at the head and centre of her immediate family and told me the following:

'I acknowledge that I am still in a stage of growth I believe that elderly people are still in the learning process ... as we advance in age'.

Yet, she observes a sense of urgency to get things done and states that she 'is not dependent on anyone' because as she further expands,

'it does not help calling children because I am there for them'.

Mrs. Evans also states,

'there is work to be done so I prioritise the things that I identify needing attention. I also put myself out to help others because I am very able and independent.'

Her esteem elevates her feelings of self-worth, as she learns new things from her grandchildren. Describing herself as enterprising, she acknowledges that the elders of her generation broken down social barriers in England and engaged in arenas such as education. She therefore believes that it is important to steer the younger generation in appropriate ways by encouraging them emotionally to contribute to the community and to society, clearly recognising her role as a leader and teacher.

In opposition to this central figure of leadership, Mr. Taylor's thoughts present an alternative mindset as he comments on his elderly life saying, 'I 'didn't know I would reach so far'. He told me that he feels proud of his longevity and



recognises the process of ageing is cyclical for he states we are, 'once a man, twice a child'. He looks at death as a reality that will take place so he takes one day at a time. He says that he tries to make himself happy, enjoy life and thanks God every day for his life, health and strength. He also embraces the changes that he has made throughout his life. He acknowledges that it is important to live for others and not for just for himself, therefore he tries to help others as much as possible. Remarking on his earlier stage in life he informs me that he was carefree, saying, 'I float around a lot, wasn't thinking about old age 'till it catch up on me'. Although he adopts a philosophical approach to life and its inevitable end, he also recognises his lack of planning when he was younger in recognition that he would grow old and would need a secure home, income, family and social contact. Instead, his elderliness just arrived rather than him acknowledging it as a progressive and important stage in his life course. He therefore does not naturally assume a central role but realises his need to find an appropriate position as an elderly man. He has therefore joined the church and stopped his former drinking habits, now helping others in the community.

This finding also reflects the elderly gender differences identified by Davenport (1961). Davenport found that women developed bonds with their children and other family members who could look after them and continued to be useful in the kitchen but a feeble old man had limited value and this often resulted in him hanging around younger men for handouts, or resorting to begging. Maturation alone in the Jamaican context did not confer any status and role for the poor man who did not engage in kinship bonds. I therefore suggest that in the West Indian context, and through my findings that old age and earning respect are related and enable inclusion rather than conferred solely by old age. Consequently, I suggest that for the West Indian elderly man, his ability to be useful determines his status. He needs to find a physical, practical or economic role that he can play in order to remain influential to his family and therefore receive help when older. Indeed, Barrow (1998) found men played multiple roles in their families in Barbados and were protective of their older sisters who looked after them when they were young, nonetheless my research provides a contrast. My findings are more aligned with Chevannes (2001) who undertook

more recent work into the role of fathers in Jamaica and found men too had a multifaceted engagement in society, being both supportive as well as disengaged from their families.

Still, strict gender differentiations are not obligatory in today's contemporary society and elderly men can take an interest in assisting with childcare, and retire without working and be accepted by virtue of age. Therefore, Reynolds (2005) found some men in England held powerful central positions in their family and helped with childcare. Nevertheless, only one of my male informants took up this opportunity as an elder. Instead, some of my elderly male informants engaged in drinking because they had become marginal and separated from children and kin. I suggest that this limited incorporation into their families is also a contributory factor behind the separations, and further enabled a connection with younger people in the community. Issues of centrality, marginality and respect or the lack of these describes the diverse responses I found regarding my informants' elderhood.

### *Respect for the elderly in the community*

Indeed as individuals, my informants have differing approaches to their elderliness, nevertheless placed in society under the banner of elderly serves to differentiate them as different to younger people. Although many of my informants remained mobile and integrated into the community and were encouraged to participate in social activities, ageing proved problematic. They recognise their difference and express views for different treatment to honour their elderliness, for this was not always forthcoming and thus personified the notion that ageing is met with ambiguity in society.

Thompson (1995) provides a critique of ageism by suggesting that a uniform approach to age will have little regard for dignity, rights and empowerment of the aged. He suggests that the existing discrimination and oppression under ageism should be challenged, as the aim should be to combine old age with dignity and combat the stereotypes that marginalise elderly people in mainstream society. Indeed, elderly people are subject to dismissive and

demeaning language towards them, physical, emotional and financial abuse, economic disadvantage and restricted opportunities or 'life changes' (Thompson 1995:5-6). These disadvantages, Thompson suggests, are rooted in the way that society is organised so expressed negative ageism through personal, cultural and structural social processes. Consequently, I also found that my informants experience issues that are specifically a product of age, as outlined by Thompson (1995). Nevertheless, my informants, as vulnerable people, often frail and in need of support, encountered hostility in the community.

Elderly people are individually different and have different personalities, needs, strengths and weaknesses and this is a truism concerning my research group. Nonetheless, Stevenson suggests ageing is associated with anxious feelings, feared and treated as evil in British society (1989:7). Such fears and anxieties are complex and deep rooted perhaps arising from bygone myths and legend bound with prejudice and stereotyping. As a result a unified respectful response to the aged has not developed. The fact is, old age is problematic and the treatment of old age is arbitrary (Stevenson 1989: 9). Similarly, I found varying responses to my informants as elderly people.

The elderly people in my research are part of a small minority of the black population. As such, I suggest that this sets them apart from their local community and gives rise to issues of their separateness as an elderly ethnic group within the wider elderly group. I found that they are quite well equipped in dealing with being termed a minority and existing in a marginal space that their elderliness compounds. However, my informants are additionally victimised in the local community as elderly people who become vulnerable easy targets.

I sat with a group consisting of my elderly informants and other elderly people at a Day Centre they attend. I talked to them about how they felt about being elderly amongst younger people in the local community. I found they generally felt a lack of appreciation towards them as elderly people. Their responses reflected that this lack of appreciation caused anxiety particularly when they went out to their local shopping area in central Brixton. This area is convenient

for shopping because the shops sell the foodstuffs they need. A location that they have become familiar with over the decades but with a growing predominance of younger people residing there and changes in their circumstances, such as lessened mobility and strength, they exhibit some fear of this environment. Nonetheless, not inhibited from going out of their homes, they enter it. Nevertheless, a question of respect and trust arises between them and the younger generation, as one informant remarked, 'when you walking down a Brixton some a dem just push you'.<sup>29</sup>

The group generally showed agreement with this sentiment that young people do not move out of their way but expect them, as elderly people, to do the manoeuvring, even if they are obviously laden with shopping and much older and frailer. They told me that instead of helping them some of the youngsters make them feel intimidated, vulnerable, and distant from the younger generation who they do not understand, and who they think, in the main, do not understand them. A sentiment qualified by the comment by another informer who remarked, 'some a dem don't even 'ave no manners'<sup>30</sup>, 'some is ok but some of dem is terrible man. I don't know if is upbringing or whatever they are taking or whatever it is'<sup>31</sup>.

It is fair to say they are not tarnishing all of the young people with the same brush because there are instances where younger people have been very helpful to them. In this respect, they said, 'some a dem they see you coming pass, they say mama you want to cross, and just go inna de road an' stop de traffic,'<sup>32</sup>. Unfortunately, as much as some are so kind, others are very unkind, specifically when they meet in dangerous situations on the road, as another remarked, 'when the light signal stop these bicycle don't want to stop, if you

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<sup>29</sup> When walking in Brixton some push you.

<sup>30</sup> Looking at all the young people, some of them do not have manners.

<sup>31</sup> Some of them are ok, some are terrible, I do not know if it is their upbringing or whatever it is that they are taking.

<sup>32</sup> Some of them see you walking past, ask if you want to cross the road, they then go in the road and stop the traffic for you.

don't mind dem kill you man. Dem will knock you down'<sup>33</sup>, remarked another elder.

The elderly people are therefore very aware of their environment and the issues they face within it. There is a fear of the younger generation especially when they have experienced violence, crime and disrespect. For example, Mr. Griffiths's story puts this concern and their elderly plight into context because it highlights his and others' vulnerability and expectations. Unfortunately, his obvious vulnerability does not ensure that young criminals will leave him alone. Mr. Griffiths's feisty spirit keeps him active and engaged with his neighbours in the scheme and in the local community, despite the dangers.

Mr. Griffiths is of small build and approximately five feet four inches tall with a slight physique. He told me he has lost a lot of weight because he used to be stocky, indeed, his suits show his former size. He sometimes walks with the aid of a walking stick but carries himself confidently as he walks with determination in the street. However, I observed from walking with him that he meanders rather than walks in a straight line down the road. He is prone to crossing the road without paying sufficient attention to on-coming cars and this is risky because the car driver *must* move out of *his* way or injure him. He is intermittently lucid and incoherent which mirrors his mental condition. In talkative mood, he told me of his thoughts in the context of contrasting his circumstances with needs. He drew together his connection with younger family members and other younger people that highlight the polarities between him as an old man and others, reflected below. His early experience and thoughts of elderliness were different to his current experiences. Although he finds kindness in the community, the fears and actual violence he experiences, exacerbate his isolation and vulnerability as an elderly man. To fully appreciate his vulnerability, and that of similar frail elders in my research group, I have included some personal details he shared about his experiences and thoughts. They serve to contextualise his treatment as a lonesome elderly man, in relation to his expectations. Interestingly, his engagement with other elders in

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<sup>33</sup> When the traffic light signals to stop some of the bicycles do not want to stop, if you do not look they will kill you, they will knock you down.

the scheme proved paradoxical because he finds respect from some younger strangers and disrespect from some fellow elders.

He began,

'I am 85 years old. I have been married and widowed twice. I worked as a chef and for many years for Lambeth Council as a Park Keeper in Brockwell Park. So I have a state pension and one from my work. They diagnosed me with dementia but I am not a cripple, I still go out. When I go out you know I like to dress smart. I like to dress in suits and put on my hat.

I was born in Jamaica, and I spent my early childhood with my parents, brothers and sisters and grandparents nearby, as one family.<sup>34</sup> I am one of ten children and I remember my early life in Jamaica as warm and loving but my life now is cold and lonely. My father was a Preacher and a strict disciplinarian that brought guidance, respectability, stability and happiness to us. It was from him that I learnt to respect my elders.

In the past, I sang in the church choir and went to church services but I have not been to church for a while. I sometimes see church brethren when I go to Brixton. They remember me from church and ask me how I am. None of them come to see me at home though. I used to visit the local pubs for a drink in the evenings, but I do not drink any alcohol anymore because of the medication I take. I take painkillers for my arthritis.

I do not have much family around me now. Most of my family live in Jamaica. My niece, a younger woman, who lives up the hill used to come and see me and I use to go and have dinner with her on Sundays. I do not see her anymore because she is rude and abusive

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<sup>34</sup> His use of 'one family' refers to his extended family unit living as one family recognising their interactive closeness.

to me, so I stopped all contact with her. She grew different to me so she does not have the respect for older people that I expect. Instead of helping me, she wants something from me, so I don't trust her.

My field notes also highlight Mr. Griffiths's insecurity resulting from being isolated from his family. This led to seeking friendship and security with me because I represented someone trustworthy. My notes state, on one occasion Mr. Griffiths lost his savings book. He searched his flat frantically having saved some money from his two pensions, a work pension as well as a state pension. He found it and he showed me his savings, over £1,000.00. Mr. Griffiths hinted to me to look after it and look after him when the time came to use it on funeral arrangements. I felt this inappropriate, and made a polite excuse, encouraging him to put it away safely again. He was constantly worried about money and losing cash kept in his jacket or trouser pocket. Mr. Griffiths walked holding his pockets and constantly checked them fearing thieves, as he had been the victim of street crime. Yet, he still ventured out, and allowed me to accompany him to his favourite café, telling me,

'I go out every day walking to Brixton to a café owned by younger Turkish people in the arcade in Brixton market. In there I eat my dinner, I get a big dinner and they treat me well and make me feel welcome. All kinds of people come into this café, the market traders, shoppers, the young and old from every part of the world. When I come in here they always say hello 'Pops'. I like the way they greet me. It makes me feel like somebody<sup>35</sup>. They always find a table for me to sit by, they clear it first then I sit and they ask me if I would like my regular meal or choose another. They bring a plate full to the brim, a lot of food. They are always polite when they give it to me.'

My field notes continue, whilst with Mr. Griffiths I saw him eat this hearty meal on several occasions. He was glad to have my company with him and enjoyed the speculation he saw in others concerning who I might be. He ate his main

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<sup>35</sup> I feel noticed, recognised as a father figure and an elder in the community.

meal of the day in here. He sat quite comfortably in the café with the other diners. This dinner that he spoke of so well to me was always an English style dinner, consisting of roast potatoes with roast beef, carrots and cabbage or similar.

He usually returned to the sheltered housing scheme after lunch and sat in the lounge area, usually on a wooden chair. The wooden chair was easy to clean so designated to him due to his incontinence. Nevertheless, sometimes he sat in a fabric armchair to much disapproval and strong interchange of words between him and some of the other residents, although some are sympathetic but held quiet discomfort when this happened. Even so he often engaged in pleasant conversation with a few of the residents but many ignore and seem quite dismissive of him, although one resident, Girlie<sup>36</sup>, provided him with occasional meals.

Mr. Griffiths has basic furniture in his home. The furnishings in his bedroom consist of a bed, old wardrobe, one old chest of drawers that is broken down and an old bedside table. He has a bible that many of his conversations were about, and many suits, shirts and ties. Though not in holes, they have obviously aged and worn. There is an old settee suite, old display cabinet and small table in his living room. His kitchen has very basic equipment such as, wall cupboards, a kettle, a few cups and saucers, a couple of plates and minor cutlery but no sharp knives. He cannot really look after himself and wants a wife to look after him. The Scheme Manager says that she looks out for him, more like a daughter than a worker, however, there is still a professional boundary because he is not integrated into her social world neither is he into hers.

Mr. Griffiths's scenario shows his vulnerability, he is stuck in an environment that cannot adequately meet his increasing basic needs because he is not as independent and able bodied as the scheme criteria suggest. Nevertheless, he coped although he was lonely and confused, closed yet seeking company and

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<sup>36</sup> Girlie is a resident who chose not to be part of my research group but did participate in some of my participant observation encounters.



afraid but courageous. He used his inner strength to cope in an environment that was quite difficult to negotiate and hostile. He was quite astute and somehow knew those who he could trust in order to survive, but mostly relied on himself. This challenged professional boundaries as the Scheme Manager gave him more assistance over her employed remit. Her service to him pushed state service provision boundaries, whilst Mr. Griffiths tried to find a place in the community that he seemed to be getting too old and frail to fit into.

With much concern and disappointment, Mr. Griffiths said that young people often spoke to him and other old people as though they 'know nothing' but 'they should respect us'. Indeed Thompson (1995) states that there is a tendency to dehumanise older people who face oppression. So cities de Beauvoir who stated, 'old age is particularly difficult to assume because we have often regarded it as something alien, a foreign species' (1995:11). This alienation is expressed through mockery, humour or treating them as children. Respect was a big issue because Mr. Griffiths recognises his triumph in maintaining longevity, however, he clearly knows many others do not respect elders especially some teenagers. Mr. Griffiths has been the subject of crime on a few occasions. He described this experience one day as he said to me,

'Recently I was walking down the street in central Brixton near the tube station. A group of young youths attacked me. Young boys and girls together, they were teenagers. They pushed me to the ground and kicked me. They stole money that I had on me. I told the Scheme Manager and other residents. I still go out but I make sure I put my money deep in my inside pocket on my jacket. They were wicked, they don't have any respect.'

Further, he told me that he had not reported this incident to the police and he was not the recipient of the Victim Support service<sup>37</sup>. Being independent and ambivalent to crime prevention services, he did not allow their involvement for his assailants already got away with the crime. Instead, he is left with anxiety

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<sup>37</sup> Victim Support is the name of an organisation set up to help victims of crime.

and concern for his safety and well-being when he goes out. Incidents like these do not make him a recluse for the burden of loneliness inside his home is worse than the fear to go outside. Although he is elderly and somewhat confused, he defied his oppressors. He is not the only one to be the victim of youth street crime and to overcome it. Another victim of crime whilst amongst young people, Mrs. Scott, told me,

'I went out one day shopping in Brixton market. I was sure that I put my pension money in my bag. When I found something that I wanted to buy I looked in my bag for my purse and it was gone. I think someone pushed their hand into my bag and took it. It was a terrible shock and I felt used because they will use my money and not me. Many of the young people out there cannot be trusted because they are dishonest. This experience makes me more worried when I go out, I do go out all the same.'

In addition, another elderly informant who uses a wheelchair consequently has a disabled parking badge in his car. He frequently experiences a broken car window as criminals steal his free disabled parking badge. Locally people believe that youngsters or other vulnerable young adults commit these crimes. Mr. Melvin told me,

'I think the people who are doing this to me are wicked. They know the badge belongs to someone old or sick people. There are so many people who are on drugs and steal my badge to sell it. I have to pay to fix my car window. They do not care about stealing from a disabled man or the money I have to spend to put things right.'

My elderly informants are not strangers to crime occurring in their community, being close to it, knowing victims of crime or being victims themselves. They share a common cautiousness, fear and mistrust of teenagers and younger adults in the community. This is a genuine concern for all of my elderly informants although some have a good rapport with younger people, with a minority preferring younger company. Indeed, among the elderly group, they

were not always kind to those more vulnerable, as Mr. Griffiths's situation shows.

### *Elders and the state*

Indeed, my elderly informants have experienced enhancements to their well-being as a result of state intervention. Nonetheless, there are points of conflict that arise as they seek to adjust to the shifting boundaries (Hannerz 1992) that I found determine the form of their position as elders in society. Subtly, cultural notions concerning the responsibility to take care of my informants as frail and vulnerable old people has changed as help increasingly came from outside kinship circles and from 'workers' who were strangers. Nevertheless, while understanding their needs is straightforward, a response to them proved more difficult due to the ambiguities surrounding elderhood. The state as a symbol of regulation received unfavourable attention by my informants and not accepted as a protector of elders as it purports to be. My elderly informants therefore question how society should respond to different categories of the community.

Although the state is an influential force in Mr. Griffiths's life he is ambivalent towards it. He comments that, 'Sometime de way 'ow de government treat you, mek you feel like you are taking liberties.'<sup>38</sup> This comment arises because he finds the social welfare system difficult to negotiate due to the built in control mechanisms designed to prevent fraud. However, they result in cumbersome administrative systems that do not pay sufficient attention to the needs of the elderly. Mr. Griffiths explained,

'I went to a government office to obtain my state benefit and at first I went to the office without any documentation to prove my identity. The worker I saw sent me back home to look for a passport or other proof of my identity (in document form). I felt that I had to prove who I was although they could have checked on the computer with personal information I gave them. I felt treated no different to a

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<sup>38</sup> I feel as though I am taking liberties because of the way the state system treats me.

younger person. I was expecting to be treated differently because I am an elderly person. I thought they would show me more care and attention and make allowances for me without sending me on an extra journey.'

Similarly, Mr. James has a longstanding problem with state officials regarding his housing benefit<sup>39</sup>. It appears that his rent account had been credited with too much money from the housing benefit payment and the housing benefit department requested repayment of the over payment. This issue is over a year old and remained unresolved. Mr. James told me of his frustration,

'Everyone has become involved, the Scheme Manager, the Housing Officer and the local housing benefit office workers but the problem is still there. Lots of letters have been sent to explain the problem and the plan to sort it out. But still it cannot get sorted. See my file (he said as he picked up a large collection of letters and waved them angrily at me). This problem is driving me crazy and making me angry. They are making a simple problem hard to solve by their contradictions that causes confusions. I am tired of the constant going and coming from the housing benefit office and receiving the numerous letters that they send to me. It is tormenting me and has become a tiresome burden on me. They already know my details, I am not working and my circumstances are unchanging because I am old and retired.'

This raises an interesting point because whilst he thought his elderliness brought continuity, for his circumstances had not changed greatly, in reality he met uncertainty. Instead of the state assuming responsibility and taking pressures away from him, it placed them on him as an elderly man, an experience encountered by my other informants.

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<sup>39</sup> The state benefit that provides cash help towards the rent payments. It is a means tested benefit for people on low incomes with savings less than £16,000.

Nevertheless, a minority such as Mrs. Evans actively engaged with challenging such difficult situations with the state. She recognised her political power so excels in such difficulties. She is the only one who has engaged in adult education at university, so she has developed a different level of confidence and ability to engage in the challenge. She explained to me,

'I believe that as an elderly person I need to challenge things in order to assert my rights. For instance, I was sent a council tax bill but disputed that I owed this money. I went straight to the local council tax office and asked for the details of my local MP. I wrote to the MP and asked for assistance because they are more powerful than me and will get the problem resolved on my behalf'.

However, she was not sympathetic towards her fellow elders in the scheme because she thinks they are not active enough in this department. I detect some snobbery towards them because she also suggests it is tied in with their lack of interest for self-improvement. Quite comically, Mrs. Evans explains her other plights with some humour and great enthusiasm as she continued,

'I want to lobby the government because I do not think that pensioners should pay water rates. I am looking for other people to join my campaign, we have to levy our complaint to the top so that it can filter down to the identified problem.'

She obviously enjoys the challenge of problem solving and exerting her power as an elder but for most it is too much. She remarked poignantly that, 'I speak up for others who cannot speak up for themselves'. Nevertheless, her fellow residents, whom she criticises, comment on her zest with similar dissatisfaction stating, 'she is mad'.

Indeed society places value on people based on their economic status. Older people tend to experience the loss of economic power but in a society motivated primarily by the production of wealth, older people, as a group, are devalued and thereby disempowered (Thompson 1995:7-9). Further, the

growing dominance of New Right ideology that promotes an emphasis on personal responsibility, particularly in relation to preparations for retirement with expectations that one should have both a private pension as well as the state pension thus places an emphasis on individualism that amplifies class differences. Certainly elderly people, considered in terms of economic worth, are placed in individual competitive relationship to other elders. My informants' elderly status continues the relationship regarding the inequalities found in society that exclude and stigmatise people according to their class and status position. As beneficiaries of state benefit, my informants find their position in society determined by their economic ability and class status. However differences surface between them in respect of education and the abilities that it affords.

#### *Concerns about the position of the black elderly*

Central to one's well-being is the ability to take care of ourselves and the elderly in my research also face this challenge. My informants have suffered discrimination and they still face discriminatory circumstances. Stevenson (1989) highlights Norman's notion of their 'triple jeopardy' as he states that the elderly ethnic minorities are at risk because they are old due to the physical conditions and hostility under which they live. In addition, services are not available to them because they reside in the structure of society that is economically determined and they often do not have material wealth to win within it. This is because the financial consequences of past and present policies have resulted in the 'two worlds' (Stevenson 1989:17) of old people. There are those with financial security and those who need state supplements due to restricted financial circumstances developing a structured dependency with the state. Stevenson (1989) asserts black elders are over-represented in the latter group, where my informants are located.

My elderly informants all receive state benefits and a state pension. Some of their incomes also include a payment from a private work pension. They therefore receive differing levels of assistance but they all receive help financially from the state. Although some have sufficient monies to live on and

even to put modest sums aside, it does not significantly change their material status or social position from working class and experiencing the issues that this status attracts.

Certainly there are issues regarding integrating into the wider society that are generally recognised. Moriarty (2001) suggests that a minority of black elderly people attend Day Centres, and with an expected increase in ethnic minority elders, services must be more culturally diverse to include all sectors of the population to combat social exclusion. Although Caribbean black elders represent a significant number of people aged 65 to 74 at 13%, and the largest number from the ethnic minorities, it is argued by Butt and Mirza that 'black elderly people experience discrimination in ways that rarely differentiate between age or race', as all ages face similar discrimination in society (1996:55). Indeed, some of my informants attended specific Day Centres for black West Indian people because it was most appropriate for them to do so to socialise with others with similar culture and interests so that they could engage in familiarities. Yet, this positions them in a separate group and affects their sense of belonging. I discuss these interactions in chapters 6 and 7.

Another difficulty arises from assumptions that services for black elders are easy to provide. This is a false assumption due to the differentiations found among the black elderly resulting in differing social needs. Different needs were expressed by them highlighting that even some of the Day Centres run by black people were not attractive. One female elder at the Day Centre said to me,

'...there used to be a Day Centre where we went in which they smoke and carry on bad. There was one on Railton Road that closed down. When you go past there you smell the drink, you smell it up the street. You can also smell the cigarette. I think they had a pub downstairs. I did not feel comfortable in there'.

This particular Day Centre closed for a few years ago but it was popular with older West Indians. Ironically, it was also the one where many of the first occupants of the sheltered housing scheme, in my research, attended.

However, another Day Centre is available locally and is located in a church. I conversed with a group who attend church and reported a dislike of environments with noisy people or drinking places filled with smoke. This suggests internal differences exist within my elderly research group that appeared interesting to uncover, therefore I investigated the obvious dynamics found between them in chapter 6.

Conversely, race dynamics often remain silent, so Sullivan (1996) highlights that there has been a tendency to push difficult issues aside and suggests that a shift from the politics of race relations to the management of race has taken place. The liberal equal opportunities management of the 1980s became entwined with the 'new managerialism' or 'ethnic managerialism' and is now encapsulated in the current term referred to as managing diversity. The contemporary strategy therefore seeks to reflect cultural diversity rather than look at the existing issues of racism (1996: ix-xii). Although the modern trend seems to avoid the issue of racism, there has been recognition of the failure of the 1970s race relation's legislation in tackling discrimination and the failure of the 1980s municipal anti-racism in tackling racial inequalities. Sullivan (1996) therefore asserts that social and racial inequalities have increased and there have been poor policy developments in response. In relation to my elderly respondents, I suggest they have been subjects of these changes and continuing problems that require attention. Perhaps, these issues contribute to them asserting themselves as black West Indian elders with the help of others acting on their behalf. A dual outcome therefore results because I recognise the elderly people do get much needed help from the state as well as facing discrimination and inequalities. In fact, help from the state becomes a vital part of life sustenance for my informants, but this is also paradoxical regarding their cultural heritage and ethnicity that proves problematic to address. Situated within this predicament my informants represent an interesting and unique group about which little has been captured regarding their current interplay within the society during their elderly life. This research is therefore important in filling this gap and highlights some of the inadequacies within the race relations industry.



To sum up, regarding the position that they occupy as working class black West Indian migrants in British society, I propose that my elderly informants are situated in different positions in relation to gender as well as the relationships held with their family. Indeed the men most marginal in their families found an elderly status secured by their relationship to women, particularly younger women and also friends, particularly younger men, whilst women mostly found their elderly status conferred by their centralised position in the family. In chapter 5 I explore these gender differences further and comment on matrifocality. Overall, as elders they share the vulnerability of being victims of criminals who do not respect them as elders. Likewise, although the state provides much help they still feel ambivalent towards it as it struggles to provide an inclusive place for them as older people and as black elders.

### *Conclusion*

It is therefore important to understand that my informants form a heterogeneous group and greatly affected by personal past experiences and their contemporary position in society. They presented a mixed response to their views about themselves. Their elderly status is paradoxical, loosely defined in society and uncertainly assigned through their social interactions. My informants also present both supportive and unsupportive views and actions towards fellow elders. Although independent and individually focused, their working class status increased their reliance on the state. This determines how their elderhood is conceptualised, which consequently affects their ambiguous position in society.

The state defines the concept of elderly in the society and provides services accordingly to elders as vulnerable people. In addition my informants' notions on elderhood have been transformed through the cross-cultural influences as they engage in a more locally derived notion of their elderhood as well as continuing historical patterns found in the West Indies. Thus, their engagement has modified because the cultural practices changed with their move to residency within English culture and engagement with the state. Indeed their current position, in England, as landless elders, renders the pattern of

engagement with family through family land associations, inapplicable. They form part of society. However, the specialist black housing provisions and services separate them apart from others in mainstream elderly housing. Overall, acknowledged as different, they occupy a marginal place, as black elders, in British society.

Health affects their views, actions and roles as elders. They are obviously elderly by virtue of their age. However, some men act oblivious to their elderhood. Nevertheless, they are elderly people and have elderly bodily dysfunctional symptoms that make their associations appear incongruent with this stage in life. Moreover, some men seek younger partners and practice ageism by not taking women their own age as partners. The paradox is that they also fantasise about this because of those who seek younger women only some achieve such a relationship, and for those successful, the relationships with younger women were not enduring. This link with younger women also adds another dimension to the stage of elderhood because some are virile and consequently continuing being simultaneously fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers, thus bringing a multi-dimensional complexity to their elderly male status. Some of the elders find respect from younger people, yet all fear them and the unknown in their external environments, even services there to help them are met with ambivalence. Respect, although varied according to gender, shapes elderly status and relationships with family and others. In turn, respect also influences where my informants fit in or belong.

## Chapter 4

### **The experience of migration: planting roots**

#### *Introduction*

'We were not on bad terms but I knew it would be better for me to live in England.'

The quote above taken from my informant, Mr. Truman reflects his desire to return to Jamaica permanently to live but suggests there are inherent difficulties that inhibit him achieving it. Embedded in this predicament are issues concerning movement and re-attachment. This chapter is therefore entitled, 'The experience of migration: planting roots', because I suggest, the elderly people in my research have experienced separation from their place of origin that affects their kin relations, so seek to establish new roots. As a consequence of migration there is fracture in their kin network with loss of members and associations to their place of origin. I therefore examine my informants' connection to their formative family members and wider kinship connections in the West Indies amid internal and out migration. This enables an understanding of why their needs are met by the state and not primarily by kin. I therefore focus on how dislocation from their place of origin and weakened kin ties occurred and uncover how they became marginal and 'other' 'back home' and assess their placement in Britain. Central to my understanding of their separations and loss is the role that local proximity has played in creating family bonds and how far distance causes the separations that underpin their familial fragmentation.

My approach is historical as I examine the changes that occurred through my elderly informants' life course. In addition, there are three areas of exploration. The first aspect of the enquiry looks at the effect of their parents' movement on the formative family structure. The second examines the effect of my informants' movement and migration and that of other family members on the kin network. The third uncovers the resulting structures and connections

between my informants and dispersed family of orientation, thereby uncovering the effect on them as elderly people. I draw upon relevant theory concerning the process of travelling that creates the label of 'other' to highlight the resulting consequences. I compiled genealogy charts (Appendix A) from 16<sup>40</sup> of my informants that inform my assertions in this chapter. They serve as a social map highlighting the placement of both my informants and family members providing a vehicle through which the connections evolve concerning the interrelationship between distance, family connection and disconnection. In addition, narratives provide details that tell the stories presented in this chapter.

### *Local connections*

In chapter 2, I highlighted that anthropologists have made an important correlation between the family structure, locality and the connectivity of family members, suggesting the West Indian family structure contains multiple traits including the binding power of localised family land. Consequently, all family relations shaped by residency are affected by proximity regarding habitation through kin residing in different districts or overseas. I therefore uncover how my elderly respondents engaged in this familial structure and departed from it, to understand the impact reflected in their refocused sense of belonging. I found their connections adversely affected by migration as opposed to the strong connections families retain, recently uncovered by Bauer and Thompson (2006). For, in contrast, my informants experienced estrangement from their family land. This pragmatic estrangement results because they stayed away from it for a long time taking up permanent residency in England thereby leaving other family members to occupy it (Solien 1959; Fox 1967).

Therefore, in response to the first area of exploration concerning the family structure in my informants' formative years, key features emerged. The table in

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<sup>40</sup> Information from this data source is expressed in this chapter in the form of percentage representation. Although the sample is small the percentages are used to express the significance of particular points. Genealogy charts are in Appendix A. Although there were 26 informants, 16 participated in the construction of charts.

figure 13 shows the family of orientation links for my elderly informants<sup>41</sup>. The total, in column two, shows three-quarters of their parents married, almost a quarter resulted from extra-marital affairs and less than one-quarter were born in partnerships. One informant did not know his parents or family because being raised by his parents' friends. However, less than one-quarter knew their paternal grandfather whereas one-quarter knew their maternal grandmother, and one eighth knew both their maternal and paternal family. Indeed, two-quarters knew neither grandparent. Overall, this information suggests that although the marriage rate was quite substantial, some were born of extra-marital relationships and partnership arrangements and the grandparental link was low.

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<sup>41</sup> I draw out the comparison between these early relational formations with the similarities found in their family of procreation in chapter 5.

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Informant's Parents child-bearing status</b>	<b>Informant's Parental link &amp; Grandparental link</b>
<b>Male</b>		
Mr. Bailey	Extra-Marital	Uncle & Paternal Grand- parents
Mr. Baker	Partner	Parents & Maternal-Grandparents
Mr. Earles	Married	Parents & Maternal Grandparents
Mr. Griffiths	Married	Mat. & Pat. Parents & Grandparents
Mr. Harvey	Extra-Marital	Father & Paternal Aunt
Mr. James	Partner	Neither (Friends)
Mr. Melvin	Extra-marital	Father
Mr. Truman	Married	Maternal Grandparents
Mr. Smith	Extra-Marital	Mother
<b>Female</b>		
Mrs. Baker	Married	Parents
Mrs. Baker (a)	Married	Parents
Mrs. Baxter	Married	Parents
Mrs. Evans	Married	Parents & Paternal Grand-parents
Mrs. Harris	Partner	Mother & Maternal uncle, Aunt
Mrs. Mason	Extra-Marital	Father
Mrs. Parker	Married	Both
Mrs. Scott	Married	Parents & Maternal Grandparents
	<b>SUMMARY</b>	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	
	<b>Married 9</b>	
	<b>Extra-Marital 5</b>	
	<b>Partner 3</b>	
	<b>Pat. Gran 3</b>	
	<b>Mat. Gran 4</b>	
	<b>Both 2</b>	
	<b>Friends 1</b>	

**Figure 13** *Familial patterns and connections*

With this familial configuration in mind, I engaged in unpacking the effect of residency on familial connectivity for I asked my informants whom they lived with, whether they knew their grand parents and extended kin. I also asked about the household in which they lived. Four main patterns<sup>42</sup> emerged from the group. These patterns highlighted their formative familial structure was formed locally but was affected by spatial separations.

First, it transpires that in this early period in their lives most of my informants had contact with both sides of their grandparents if their parents were living together and the grandparents resided in the same locality. For example, the genealogy chart of Mr. Griffiths (Appendix A, Figure G) expressed who he knew, He said,

'I know my grandparents. We were all living close, you know in St. Thomas. My father's parents were living in the house with us. We were all one big happy family. I loved my grandparents they were very kind. I remember that we would all sit and eat together. My father was a Preacher so he mek<sup>43</sup> sure that he bring us up together in a loving home, with strict discipline. My grand father was also a Preacher and he mek sure we didn't get up to no trouble. My grand parents by my mother side lived not far away in the same district as us. So I see them regular like. My father sent us down to look for them.'<sup>44</sup>

This contact was also enjoyed by Mr. Baker, (Appendix A, Figure C), who told me that,

'We all lived in Clarendon, so I got to know both of my grandparents. I had nough<sup>45</sup> brothers and sisters, aunty, uncle and cousins in the district. My father was not married to my mother. I was the only child

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<sup>42</sup> Pattern refers to emerging trends from the group, although some individuals re-created their formative kin structure.

<sup>43</sup> The word 'mek' means made in this context.

<sup>44</sup> 'To look for them' refers to going to visit someone.

<sup>45</sup> The term 'nough' means 'a lot of' in this context.

between my mother and father. My mother had 7 of us. My father had 10 children. We kinda scatter in the district because we lived in different houses. I lived with my mother and brothers and sisters that she have with other men. My mother's grandparents were the ones who looked after me mostly because my mother died when I was 12 years old '.

The second pattern that arises shows that although there are circumstances where extended family members resided close together, as above, it was uncommon that such residency existed, or that they knew both maternal and paternal grandparents. If grandparents were known it was most likely that only one set would be known, either on their paternal or maternal side. Therefore, contact with a wider family network only occurred with the family residing in the same district in which they lived. This means that when their parents relocated to their partner's district they lost contact with the kin left behind. However, if they remained connected this contact may extend to their grand aunt and uncle and other relations if they lived relatively close by as expressed by Mr. Earles , (Appendix A, Figure E). He says that,

'I born and grow in St. Ann's, Jamaica. I didn't know all a me grandparents dem.<sup>46</sup> For I only know my mother parents. They lived in St. Ann's. I know my mother sister and brothers. There were four of dem<sup>47</sup>, one sister and three brothers. My Father's people dem live in another Parish so I never know dem at all.'

Grandparents on one side were also lost where previous out-migration had occurred due to circumstances where the parent of my elderly informant was born in a different country in the West Indies to the one my elderly informant was born in. For example Mrs. Evans, (Appendix A, Figure E) explained,

'My father was born in Trinidad but his family went to live in Guyana. My mother was born in Panama and went to live in Canada. My

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<sup>46</sup> I did not know all of my grandparents

<sup>47</sup> 'Dem' means 'them' in this context.



parents then came to live in England where they met. My father and mother then went to live in Guyana where I was born. So I got to know my father's parents only. My father worked for the British Government so travelled with his job and went to live in Canada. My brothers and sisters were born in Canada. When I was 9 years old we came to live in England.'

This common experience was also highlighted by Mr. Truman, (Appendix A, Figure Q), who told me that,

'I never know my grandfather on my father's side because he lived in South America. My grandparents on my mother's side lived in Jamaica so I know dem. We all live inna<sup>48</sup> Kingston. But I never really know de rest of dem.'

These experiences provide interesting information about the familial connections of my elderly respondents. They illustrate the different configurations found in their familial structure, a structure that is multidimensional and affected by spatial separations. As a result I would agree that their family structure harbours fragmentation and loss that was highlighted in chapter 2.

My third pattern highlights scenarios where my informants' fathers engaged in a new relationship with their mother while already in a relationship. Therefore, some of my informants' parents and siblings lived in different households. Mrs. Mason (Appendix A, Figure K) was born into such a cross-household configuration. Her father engaged in a relationship whilst married to another woman, her mother being his mistress. Mrs. Mason was born because of her father's extra-marital affair. Mrs. Mason and the other elderly people with a similar experience moved from one household to another. They experienced the loss of their mother and movement into their father's household and lived with their stepmother and stepsiblings. This caused unhappy situations and

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<sup>48</sup> 'Inna' means 'in' in this context.

further movement that eventually resulted in escape and loss of kin ties. Mrs. Mason and Mr. Harvey (Appendix A, Figures K and I) told me their stories.

Mrs. Mason says,

'I had a very hard childhood, tough. I was so unlucky my mother died when I was young, I think I was 2 years old. So my father took me to live with his family in another district.

I lived with my father, stepmother and their two children. They were very cruel to me and I hated living with them. My step-mother was wicked and used to mock me and my skin colour. They use to say about me, 'who is that black dolly over there?' This is because I have darker skin colouring than her and her children. None of them made me feel welcome, I was treated like an outsider and I felt like one.

When I was 14 years old I ran away from them. I went to another area. I got a job working as a domestic helper, cooking for a family. I also lived in their household. The man of the house abused me. Imagine, I ran away and I find myself in trouble again. I was so unhappy. I had no one to help me and no family.

As soon as I could I arranged to come to England. I came here to get away from my horrible life in Jamaica. So I don't have any contact with any family back home. The only family I have are my children and things are not good there either.'

Similarly, Mr. Harvey (Appendix A, Figure I) experienced household movements and highlighted the trauma involved in moving between maternal and paternal kin and eventually severing contact with most of them. Mr. Harvey, a man of medium build, with severe knee injuries once served in the army, stationed in Kingston in his youth. He told me that he used to be addicted to working out and weight training but now walking is becoming difficult for him due to weakness in his knees. He describes himself as a quiet person who no

longer likes too much 'excitement'. His tidy well-presented flat shows his domestic skills. A picture of his son and grandson hints to his family connections. As we sat in his living room, he cautiously spoke about his childhood. He began,

'I had a difficult time growing up in Jamaica. My father had relations with my mother in St. Ann, Jamaica, but he was not married to her. He was married to someone else and had a family. So my mother looked after me. I lived with her and my grandmother. This was a very loving home and I enjoyed being with her. It was tough so my mother and grandmother worked hard. Other people would look after me when they were working. I use to get up very early, clean up the yard<sup>49</sup>, look after the pigs, collect the water from the standpipe and bring it home before school. I did not always go to school though and I was often late for school or missed school. When I did go to school I had a long journey so I was tired but afterwards I still had to walk back home.

The hard work of my mother and grandmother did not mean we had money, we were poor and I remember feeling hungry a lot of the time and I was anaemic. I often walked barefoot or wore a 'crepe'<sup>50</sup> on my feet rather than shoes because my mother could not afford shoes because we were poor. I was often left alone as I got older and sometimes I was left on my own for up to a week when my mother and grandmother were away working. I had to take responsibility for myself. So I had to take care of myself. I learnt to cook and look after myself at a young age. I do remember feeling very lonely.

I am 'mixed race', my father is a white man from Scottish ancestry but he never looked after me. He worked in a chemist store and had many women, although he was married, so some of my brothers and

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<sup>49</sup> I woke up and undertook household cleaning chores and also cleaned the area outside the house.

<sup>50</sup> 'Crepe' refers to a plimsoll.

sisters are unknown to me, He moved around, was widowed, remarried and divorced. He moved to Canada but I do not have any connections with anyone there. My mother took my father to court to provide maintenance for me but he did not want to pay the maintenance so he sent me to stay with his sister, my aunt who lived in another Parish. She was married to a policeman who had more money than us, a nicer house and more food. I recall wearing shoes, having food to eat and the luxury of cakes but I was unhappy.

As a result I returned to live with my mother. Unfortunately my mother died when I was eight years old and she was 28 years old. My grandmother looked after me, she was a 'higgler'.<sup>51</sup> She was a black Jamaican woman who used to work as domestic in Cuba for an American family. I stayed with her until I joined the army. I knew two sisters on my father's side, but not very well and I do not have contact with their families now. One has died but lived in Wolverhampton with her husband, she had 5 children, one moved to Florida. I did not know the other sister much but she lives in America.'

My informants' movement as youngsters was related to the maintenance of their welfare, as fathers attempted to take responsibility by taking them out of their mother's impoverished household. Nevertheless, the long-term consequences are less favourable in terms of kinship ties. These examples indicate the difficulty, for children born of extra-marital affairs, to integrate into the receiving kin network. Consequently, as elderly people, they may not have extended kin from their family of orientation, or very little, so they become estranged from both the West Indies and their family. Indeed, such child-shifting has serious consequences that are now recognised as having a negative impact on children (Reynolds 2006). This therefore facilitates a situation in which the elderly person assimilated into their current place of residency and localised systems of support. These mainly arise from friends or the state services.

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<sup>51</sup> 'Higgler' means market trader in this context.

My fourth pattern serves to illustrate a more positive economic aspect of such household movement that also paradoxically produced limited kin ties. Mr. Bailey (Appendix A, Figure A) was taken as a child from his mother's household to another. This removed him from having strong contact with his mother's side of the family and his siblings when he was growing up. He became more integrated into his receiving kin network. Mr. Bailey's story also highlights the role that economic stability played as a deciding factor of with whom and where he lived. He sat in a chair next to the small table facing me in his flat as he recounted his early life experience. He told me,

'I started life from a very humble place. My fortunes soon changed when I was taken from my mother to live with my father's brother. He took me in because I could not go and live with my father. When I was born my father was already married but he 'fool'<sup>52</sup> around with my mother. My mother was the maid who worked for my father.

I lived in Falmouth with my uncle who was rich and able to take me in. With his money and business he could afford to bring me up with privileges. I have other brothers and sisters on my mother's side but I don't really know them. I know my brothers on my father's side of the family.

My uncle made his money from buying land and selling the lumber from trees that grew on the land. He allowed other people to plant crops on the land as long as they left the trees and lumber alone. He was also a money-lender and had a bar. He was a benevolent man and would help people with small court fines knowing that they could not pay the money back. At other times he lent money to the poor and did not receive any repayment. He had maids helping him in the house and I always wondered how the maids at the house devote themselves to a family as my mother did for my father, although she was not able to look after me.'

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<sup>52</sup> His father had a sexual relationship with his mother.

Through this less frequent occurrence, my informant cared for by his paternal kin ties lost his maternal kin ties. I surmise from the above that the formative 'known' kin network of my elderly respondents was strongly determined by proximity because family members at a distance or in another locality became separated and unknown to them. The reasons for the geographical separations and ensuing closure to relationship formations were varied and included movements that were affected by poverty, extra-marital affairs, abuse and death that caused separation from one line or both lines of kinship. However, there was a very slight tendency for children to be more connected to their maternal kin. Although where practical paternal and maternal kin looked after children, however, movement between maternal and paternal households resulted in a loss of kin ties, as paternal kin ties were mostly not enduring. I therefore acknowledge that the households of my elderly informants were of varying shape and form and few remained connected to both sides of their family. I thought this connection not solely related to matrifocality as M.G. Smith (cited in R.T. Smith 1996) and others highlighted. It therefore appears a parent may send youngsters to live with the most convenient, able or economically stable person(s)<sup>53</sup>. I think this provided the key to their household configuration where parents were not married neither lived together. I further explore gender differences and matrifocality in chapter 5.

### *National and trans-national connections*

With regard to my second area of exploration concerning the effect of my elderly informants' movement and migration on their kin network, I discussed with them what happened after movement and migration. I therefore looked at the resulting connectedness of the elderly respondents with their kin arising because of their economic migration as adults and the on-going migration of their formative family members. I found interesting patterns concerning their residency in England and the trans-national placement of their kin that created vast distance between them. I acknowledge that outward migration is a

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<sup>53</sup> In chapter 5 I further explore gender differentiations and matrifocality by looking at my respondents' personal experiences in relation to parenting children and grandchildren. Consequently, I found that similar relationship ties continued for my group of informants.

common feature of the lifestyle of West Indians who have been travelling for employment since emancipation, and this is well documented by Philpott (1974), Thomas-Hope (1986, 1992, 1995, 1998), Chamberlain (1995, 2005), Goulbourne (1999, 2006), Olwig (1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007) and others as outlined in chapter 2. Nevertheless, I found my elderly respondents adversely affected by the distance created between family members as a result of their migratory culture.

Therefore in this section I examine how their residence in Brixton, as elders, is affected by the global post-modern fracture experienced by people whose local existence harbours consequences from their global connections (Strathern 1995). They are spatially separated therefore I looked at the influences from wider inter-connected familial relations arising from trans-national migration. I found that global familial spatial separations affected my informants' attachments and relations that in turn affected their need to root and negotiate a sense of belonging in England. The negotiation started from arrival continues, as they have now become elderly people who cannot move. This echoes the thoughts relayed to me in the field by Mrs. Scott, whose husband passed away three years ago, she said (Appendix A, Figure N),

'I am alone here really. I don't have relations living near to me. My grandson went to live in Jamaica and he was my closest link here. He wanted me to go with him, and my brother out there wanted me to come as well, but how can I go? I don't feel confident to leave here now. Everything I need is here.'

I found a small amount of connections existed between my informants', their family of orientation and extended kin but these were difficult to maintain. Contact remained sporadic where family members were located in other areas in London due to the distance between them. For example, Mr. Bailey found it difficult to travel to see his brother's family in East London. Attending a family christening highlighted his difficulty.

'I was invited to my grand niece's baby christening in Stratford, East London. My niece staying with me from Canada went with me. We had to travel there on public transport. We get the tube from Brixton and change trains but the journey was too much for me. When I come back I get poorly, it was too much for me. I don't think I can manage the long journey like that any more. It was the walking, you know. From here to the tube station and the up and down on London transport. Too hard for me, I don't usually do that distance but because it is a party and I they invite me, I do my best to attend. '

It also emerged that 30% of my respondents had family connections in other locations in England, such as Birmingham. Nevertheless, although this connection is available they may not engage with it frequently. Mrs. Baxter (Appendix A, Figure B) explained,

'My sister lives in Birmingham. We keep in touch by telephoning each other from time to time. My children will drive me up there for a visit and sometimes my sister would visit me. But we do not see each other very much. Only a few times a year. I do not feel so well these days so I do not travel far as often as I used to. '

Mrs. Scott (Appendix A, Figure N) also experienced such weakened relations. She says,

'I really feel quite alone here in England because most of my family live in Jamaica and America.'

Those with family overseas have a high percentage of these outside of the West Indies. Regarding overseas connections, 80% of my elderly respondents have relatives in multiple locations that include Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean, America and Canada. In relation to connections outside of the Caribbean region, 30% of my elderly respondents have relatives in Canada and 70% in America. This reflects that although there are family connections in England, there are also large numbers overseas. The dispersal of familial



members of the elderly respondent overseas is therefore significant<sup>54</sup>. Consequently, the distance between family members affects contact between them. Contact is minimal, sporadic and strained eventually disappearing in the worst situations.

The West Indian culture of economic migration explains the reason for the dispersal of family members within the West Indies and out of it. When I looked at the movement of my elderly respondents when they were younger I found that they mirrored the migratory patterns. Some of my informants moved around within Jamaica and some of the men travelled to America and other locations in the Caribbean to work before migrating to England. Indeed Mr. Baker (Appendix A, Figure C) told me, 'before I came to England I went to do farm work in America. I went twice, the first time in 1958 and the second in 1959'. They also moved around in Jamaica such as relocating to Kingston to work in a factory and to undertake training or to serve in the army. So seeking employment and economic stability was of paramount importance to them. Mr. Harvey (Appendix A, Figure I) expressed his joy at joining the army.

'I joined the army as soon as I could. I moved to Kingston and my life changed. The army gave me stability. I got so much more food and I was never hungry. They provide the uniform and quarters to live in, so I never worry about accommodation. I was looked after. I stayed in the army and as soon as I left I came to England. '

However, ties to the family area in the rural parishes began to weaken as more and more people left and stayed away for long periods then permanently relocating to England. There are instances, although in the minority, where kin ties continued and the lines of contact remained strong such as those of Mrs. Harris (Appendix A, Figure H).

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<sup>54</sup> The familial connections of the elderly respondents to their children are explored in Chapter 5 where I highlight a strong tendency for family relations to break-down and for associations to be weak in addition to gender differentiation.

Mrs. Harris greeted me with a smile and was ready to talk to me about her family and this was a refreshing experience for others were quite suspicious or at first were a little cautious. She seemed delighted even eager and proud to talk about her family. She was not intimidated by me recording her, so un-intimidated that when the tape recorder mechanism stuck, she voluntarily repeated the sentences that she thought I had missed. It soon became clear that she was fluid in her interactions with me because she continued to have a supportive family network despite the length of the distance between them. She was able to mitigate the difficulties of keeping associations alive which fuelled her confidence to discuss her family ties. Mrs. Harris told me,

'I was brought up by my grandmother, aunt and uncle in the country in Jamaica, so I lived with them and my cousins, in the same 'yard'<sup>55</sup>. My uncle got married and left to set up his own home. My mother was away in the capital, Kingston working. At eighteen years old I went to live with her in Kingston to attend college for a year. So I moved between the country and Kingston. Soon after I left college I got married and had my first daughter. I went back to the country to have her and I left her there with my aunt. I returned to Kingston to stay with my mother who was working at a paper factory. I worked with her at this factory. I soon conceived another child and went to the country to give birth. My second child also stayed in the country with my aunt and I returned to Kingston.

Next week I am going to visit my uncle, daughter and grandchildren in America for the first time, my son bought me the ticket.'

### *The effect of dispersal*

Nevertheless, the movement of people mostly resulted in the creation of distance in their relationships. With migration to England the elderly respondents left siblings behind in Jamaica, some of whom were born after

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<sup>55</sup> The term 'yard' refers to the household.

they left. The implications of this are great. The following experience of Mr. Truman (Appendix A, Figure Q) illustrates this point. Mr. Truman, a timid elderly, man spoke to me at length one afternoon and was very engaging about his life experience. I saw the frowns on his face, the shyness with which he began and soon understood the tragedies that lay behind his permanent frown and anticipation in uncovering his life to me. As we continued to go further into his familial ties, he lost his concerned look, for we had moved past the roles of researcher and subject. Although our roles remained present, we also graduated to that of speaker and listener, a situation through which we both had our needs met. He started by telling me,

‘I was born in Jamaica into a family of 10 children. I was the second eldest. My sister Bernice (now deceased) was the eldest and came to England first. When I came I stayed with her until I found accommodation of my own. Unfortunately I left my other brothers and sisters in Jamaica. After a while some left Jamaica and migrated to Canada and America and had children in those countries. This means that I have not seen most of my brothers and sisters for most of my life. Two of them were very young when I left Jamaica so we only spent a little time together. I do not even know some of my brothers and sisters living abroad.’

His engaging experience illuminated the tragic loss of his family, so great is the implication of being absent from kin that relationships could not be formed, and through time the family he knew passed away, and he became remote from the new births. In addition, other family members migrated elsewhere so they are also unknown.

To further unpack the impact of migration on my informants' kinship familial connections, I examine the effect of their separations. My informants left younger family members residing in Jamaica on migration to England. These people also migrated, thus serving to further weaken kinship ties resulting from large trans-national migration. Consequently, the elderly people have relations in London, other cities in England, Jamaica, other areas of the West Indies and

the Americas. Although the ties remain alive emotionally, the relationships experience the devastating effect of the far distance thus rendering my elderly respondents victims of the separation and dispersal.

I therefore suggest that a theme arises out of the problematic nature of distance. I view the movements made by my respondents and their family members as having such a cumulative negative effect that it gives the factor of distance itself power to separate. This process I suggest situates my elderly informants in a position in which known siblings and extended family members are physically too far away from them to be of support socially and practically, now that they are old and weak, which makes them more reliant on the state<sup>56</sup>.

Similarly, contact with siblings is strikingly low affected by the migratory process as well as by death. The consequence of this is that my informants have limited contact with nieces, nephews, and their offspring. Only 30% of my elderly informants had sibling contact, with only 3 of my respondents having a remaining sibling residing in England though they live at a distance.

To sum up so far, movements of kin result in the members of my sample of elderly persons disengaging from one line of their family, so they begin their lives 'knowing' only a small number of kin. As they grow older, they relocate in their country of origin and thereafter migrate externally. Thus, their network of 'known' kin further diminishes. I suggest that consequently have very limited kin associations in their elderly stage in life. An example from Mr. Melvin (Appendix A, Figure L) highlights the outcome of the on-going separations that influence elderly lives.

I had made an appointment to visit Mr. Melvin to discuss his family connections. On my arrival at his flat, he invited me in and offered me a seat in his living room. A room that mirrored his sad sentiments concerning his family connections, for like his weakened ties and his sentiments of a desire for more, the rooms needed more attention to the decorations and furnishings that he

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<sup>56</sup> In chapter 6 and 7 I examine the interface my respondents have with the State services.

could obviously not undertake himself. The furnishings were old and though presentable were well travelled. I felt as though I had walked back in time into the seventies. Mr. Melvin was preparing some food in his specially adapted kitchen that catered for his mobility problems. As we spoke I moved closer to him to engage in conversation. He told me,

'My mother died when I was just a month old. My father and mother were not married. He was married already. He met his wife when he went to Cuba and they returned to Jamaica together. However they did not have any children so I do not have any brothers and sisters.

I was brought up by my father but I never saw my grandfather on my father's side because my father was afraid that he would take me away from him. My mother's family visited me occasionally but we were not close.'

Far relations are usually thinly maintained and infrequent. Indeed Mr. Bailey's (Appendix A, Figure A) experience affects his mood, as he feels very lonely and isolated.

Mr. Bailey spoke to me quietly and calmly. He was keen to show me his extensive music collection that he kept in the form of cassette tapes whilst telling me of his love of music and that he liked dancing and going to parties earlier in his life. His eyes revealed a sparkle as he spoke of his love of women and how successful he had been with them when he was younger. He showed me a letter from a local influential authority figure in Jamaica praising his management of his uncle's business in his younger days. However, he was not joyous concerning the links maintained with his family. He said,

'I started to travel in 1999 and went to Canada first. I then went to America and Jamaica. But I had been away from Jamaica for a very long time before I returned, some forty years after I left.

I came to England to work and to get away from a sticky situation I got into when I went back to stay in the country with my uncle. I cannot go back to the district I was raised in because the person this predicament concerns still lives there. I left because of what happened so I am discouraged from returning. My uncle has since died and new family members live on his land and in his house. I don't know them, so I cannot really go there although I have the right to return. In general, I think my family are absent minded because they are not sensitive enough towards me and they are too distant.'

This situation therefore leads him into isolation, with long periods of no contact with kin that fuels his re-aligned sense of home, attachment and belonging. (However, perhaps his 'sticky situation' also caused the loss of association to his kin for he had to stay away, and perhaps they too wanted him to stay away.) Similarly, a refocus arises when others pass away or move away from them.

Therefore, distance between the elderly person and their family has created a dispersed and familial structure that is incapable of adequately supporting my elderly respondents. Consequently, paradoxical circumstances arise out of this migratory movement, for although life conditions and health may have improved for my informants, their dependency on the state prevents them from returning 'home'. In addition, the connections with 'home' have weakened. As a result, I suggest that reliance on the state services sustains them and their individual focus. This dependent relationship further changes their relationship to 'home'. England has become the place in which their sense of belonging grows whilst their link with back home and with their kin network diminishes.

#### *Identity and the individual focus resulting from migration and dispersed kin*

The notion of growing individualisation is, I suggest, applicable here as another important feature associated with people who migrate. For as St. Hilaire (citing Henriquez *et al* 1984, Meinhof & Galasinski 2005 and Myers 2006) stated, 'identity is increasingly viewed as multiple, layered and dynamic (2007:60).

Indeed, Mr. James (Appendix A, Figure J) recognises the link between identity and individualisation, saying,

'I was always independent because I never have anyone to help me when in Jamaica as a young man. I help myself. I always help myself. That is why I am now so independent. I like it that way because I do not want to be a bother to anyone. I still rely on myself mainly.'

He explained that his individualistic focus grew as part of a survival mechanism that he applied to his life that became part of his identity. In respect of my other elderly respondents, I find a correlation between their identity formation and their migration history that ultimately affected their sense of belonging. Certainly, Mintz (1971) found that their history of enslavement and experience of freedom after emancipation, through which the Caribbean developed into an interesting socio-cultural area, also enabled individualism to develop. Mintz described this individualism as arising from 'the lack of a developed community life or community spirit ... one aspect of the individualisation of Caribbean peoples. Another aspect of such individualisation seems to be revealed by the special kinship, mating and domestic forms that typify rural life. As ... 'these folk create radial sets of two-person linkages, and at the centre of each such series is a single individual', however, group and community based activity does occur (Mintz 1971:39-41). Indeed, my informants reflect the outcome of the two-person linkages as family ties weaken.

Nevertheless, in anthropology a focus on identity has been difficult although theories exist that describe the process of developing an individualistic identity. This identity embedded in the process of movement and the resulting relationships between people at a distance to each other is important to consider. Individuality relates to symbolic associations attached to those who move far away, temporarily or permanently. Understanding individualism therefore involves looking at social relations and adaptations. Cheater (1995) highlights the difficulty in looking at individual identity in anthropology and suggests identity is structurally constructed rather than personally. This is

because social structures affect individual behaviour. Indeed, I accept that the wider social structures are undeniably important and very powerful. Certainly, they fuel the culture of migration. I therefore also look at the identity of my elderly informants in relation to the structure of their social relations, particularly as they connect to the social and structural process of migration. On closer examination of the movement of my elders, interesting points arise that affect their identity and their relationship to dispersed kin. Although I found my informants supported on arrival, over time they moved on to their individual units further fuelling an individual identity.

In chapter 2, I highlighted Huon Wardle's (1999:525) suggestion that through travel the migrant engages in fantasy, for there is a desire or dream associated with travel that I propose reflects an expression of their identity, as they identify with and engage in their culture of migration. Wardle also suggests their travelling was embarked upon to explore the idea of freedom, but they actually engage in losing themselves by engaging in the fascination of others in the places that they migrate to. I find that although social networks exist over state boundaries, their travel engaged them in England whilst maintaining varied and limited levels of inter-generational trans-national communication. Therefore, migration has weakened their contact with kin for they mainly do not overcome state boundaries. I therefore agree that movement affects identity, roots and ultimately a sense of belonging as my informants find ways to integrate into the local society where they live. In addition, with limited and fragile contacts whilst ageing and becoming less able to leave England they adapt to life here, although some elders tried to return 'home' to live. The freedom sought, to be independent and self-determined, has not resulted, but I disagree that they lose themselves because of their fascination of others. I agree that 'identities were under constant transformation as individuals negotiated places for themselves in society, given their particular experience as people of Caribbean origin' (Olwig 2007:269). Indeed my informants' position enables them to retain their West Indian self.

Although employment was cited by all my informants as the reason they migrated, and to a much less extent escape and adventure, their movement to



England was tied up with fantasy because most believed they could fulfil their dream and return home, whilst for others, it offered a safe haven as depicted in Figure 14 below.

No.	Informant	Adventure	Escape	Employment
1	Mr. Bailey		*	*
2	Mr. Baker			*
3	Mrs. Baxter			*
4	Mrs. Baker (b)			*
5	Mrs. Beaver			*
6	Mrs. Chambers			*
7	Ms. Duncan			*
8	Mrs. Eaton			*
9	Mrs. Elgin			*
10	Mr. Earles			*
11	Mrs. Evans			*
12	Mr. Griffiths	*		*
13	Mrs. Harris			*
14	Mr. Harvey	*		*
15	Mr. James	*		*
16	Mrs. Jarvis			*
17	Mrs. M. Johnson	*		*
18	Mrs. Mason		*	*
19	Mr. Melvin			*
20	Mr. Mitchell			*
21	Mrs. Parker			*
22	Mr. Taylor			*
23	Mr. Truman	*		*
24	Mrs. Scott			*
25	Mr. Smith			*
26	Mr. White			*

Figure 14 *Motivation to travel*

My informants believed they would be welcomed and integration made easy. Their reality turned out to be very different. On arrival, they met hostility and hardship from which they could not escape. At entry into the country, friends and family met them and took them to see their new homes. The new environment confused my informants because it did not fit the fantasy held about England. For example, Mrs. Parker (Appendix A, figure M) said,

'when I came to England and first saw the houses I thought that there must be a lot of jobs here. The houses all had chimney pots on them so I thought they were factories. Later on I realised that they were houses. '

Acquiring new homes was also confusing and unwelcoming as Mr. Griffiths (Appendix A, figure G) states,

'they were cold and damp and we use to have to use a paraffin heater, the smell was terrible. It mek you feel sad when you remember Jamaica. But in those days when you came you get stuck.'

All of my elderly informants echoed difficulty in adapting to their new lives. Mrs. Baker highlights the hardship she faced with young children as she juggled motherhood and paid employment. Mrs. Baker brought her children up with her husband but because they both had to go out to work, Mrs. Baker found life in this new country very challenging, she recalls,

'I had to wash the children's clothes by hand and put them on the rack to dry in front of the paraffin heater. We had to do everything inside the home, I worked when the children were growing up and before I left for work in the morning I would wake up my daughters at 5.30 and comb<sup>57</sup> their hair so that they were ready for school and they would go back to bed, I went to work, I worked very hard'.

Outside the home was just as painful to bear because the new community and the indigenous people were not always welcoming. Accommodation was difficult to acquire due to prejudice and discrimination that excluded them from occupation. I was reminded by several people in the scheme that they had to battle through rejections in their quest for accommodation, and overcome the signs saying,

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<sup>57</sup> Here 'comb' refers to plaiting hair.

'no blacks, Irish people, children or dogs'.

These signs placed outside lodging houses designed to keep my informants out were upsetting. Nevertheless, despite these hurdles they managed to either stay with family members or rent a room or a shared room. My thoughts of sharing accommodation was enhanced by Mr. Truman, he explained,

'I shared a room with a man I didn't even know. When I go to work he was asleep and when I come from work I get the bed'.

I asked, 'do you mean you shared a bed?' He replied,

'Yes, in those days we couldn't afford to rent a room by our self so we share the room. I did not see him because when I was in the room he was at work. It was terrible.'

The story of Mr. Harvey (Appendix A, figure 1) encapsulates the disappointments that result from their migration and hardships,

'I came to England with the intention to make a better life but I feel I did not really achieve this. I took the jobs that were available and worked in various jobs until I retired. I always worked. I was alone and never remarried after my marriage here ended long ago. I therefore only had one wage in my home so I found it hard to make any improvement. I paid rent and could not save much because there was no spare money to save. I think you have to be corrupt to get on. I worked long hours at night, working at Shuttleworths, lifting sugar, at Cadburys, at a paint company, a firm processing fur and an electronic firm. I worked in different places in Wolverhampton and London. I think they use us like tools, that's why they created us, slaves from the start and still slaves. It has worked out that we came to make English people have a better life. They look down on West

Indians for not marrying, but the English also had illegitimate children and sent their people to the workhouse when poor in past times.

I have not been back to Jamaica at all since I left and my life now is not much better than it would have been in Jamaica had I not left.'

Even in the comparative safe haven of the scheme the disappointments are echoed by a fellow elderly resident as Mrs. Jarvis<sup>58</sup> says, 'I would not be living in the scheme if I had my own house '.

Although a British colony at the time of their migration, they were aware of some aspects of being British but I suggest this is in the context of being a British subject in the West Indies. From there, the 'motherland' was an affluent place where life would be much better and different. It was rather expensive to migrate, so movement to England occurred by individual economic ability or with the help of those more financially able. Thereby the whole process of migrating centred on the individual as the traveller. Although family members or friends might help with travel costs, and accommodate them on arrival they soon moved on to individual households. Indeed, the migration was not always a permanent move but they became caught in a situation that they could not afford to leave so their status soon changed to that of a long-term migrant.

My informants' family members held a romantic fantasy about my informants in England, and my informants held a romantic fantasy of those left behind 'back home'. This also served to keep family relations at a distance after migration. In addition, if my informants had insufficient funds to keep connected to the West Indies by travelling back, the gap between them grew. As a result romantic fantasies prevailed due to the absence of a 'reality check' in many cases, or the 'reality check' came but too late, many years down the line, when my informants became old and the polarities set between kin.

Helms (1988) looked at the political and cosmological aspects of travel, highlighting some points about travel and distance that are also relevant here to

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<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Jarvis did not allow me to compile a genealogy chart.

the assessment of my research data. She assesses the symbolic construction of geographical space, distance and familial relations that serves as a correlative example. She states,

'geographical distance from a given cultural heartland may correspond with supernatural distance from the centre, that as one moves away from the axis mundi one moves towards people and places that are increasingly supernatural, mythical and powerful the more distant they are from the heartland.' (1988:4)

Helms's interest in how power is developed and ascribed to people in unknown regions underpins her ideas about relationships between people at a distance (Helms 1988:5). Therefore, Helms finds mystical powers attached to far away places and to the people who travel outward. Calling upon Durkheim's socially differentiated space she suggests that space is a dynamic aspect of social life. Space is divided, differentiated and affects social relations as well as being an aspect of the geographic landscape. Distance between people charged with meaning makes people, things as well as places accessible or leaves them distant, foreign and exotic. This process is therefore an integral part in the nature of human activity because it determines socio-temporal relationships. Therefore, 'distance means an interval of separation and the quality of the "not near" or "not here" ' (Helms 1988:9). Consequently, suggesting when physically separated people are also socially removed from each other.

Helms's enquiry into the effect of distance among the Mande heroes provides an example of the above suggestions. Citing the work of Bird and Kendall (Helms 1988) on the Mande heroes Helms assessed the effect of the meaning attached to those who travel out for adventure, work, or to acquire special powers stating,

'Whether he is simply attending school outside the village or enduring the miserable life of a migrant worker abroad, at home he is a hero whose experiences and exploits return glory to his people'. (1988:16)

Therefore, according to Helms (1988), outward movement far away to an unknown reality enabled the attribution of hero status equated with travel. The traveller glorified in the unknown mystical and magical place. This is also applicable to my informants who travelled away from their birthplace with assumptions held about England and consequently them as residents by those back in the West Indies. They are heroic because they bravely managed to travel to a dreamland against the odds of impoverishment. I believe this heroic status is a romantic attribution because they are not heroes in the traditional sense and conquer everything triumphantly but in a romanticized form of heroism. They did escape poverty in Jamaica but remained relatively poor in England relying on the welfare state, living a different reality to that conceptualised.

Certainly, their adventure, as suggested by Wardle (1999), was to escape, seeking employment in search of the gifts they assumed they would acquire, such as wealth and prosperity. These migrants in England are thereby attributed a different status and it is believed by many left behind that life in England is easier, that money is more readily available and quite often that people fare better financially than actually occurs. Through this process, I suggest a myth of prosperity attributed made them powerful and romantically heroic in the minds of those left behind. They were also ascribed greater romantic esteem and an elevated personhood attached to them. Through this process, the distance between them and kin in the West Indies creates problems with both continuing relations and returning home so ultimately keeps them apart. I therefore suggest that over time, my informants develop social, psychological as well as a physical distance to dispersed kin.

I thereby suggest a dual aspect developed in relation to their travel and individualism. They engaged in the act of travel to enhance life back home for they intended to return and reconnect with the country they left and make a better life for themselves and their family. However, in reality their movement enhanced their individualistic focus so placed them in the position of 'other'. Below, I highlight the obstacles faced by those who tried to maintain a

connection back home and the difficulties faced by those who tried to return home, as elderly people.

### *Which home is home?*

Of the 16 respondents who gave me access to their genealogy I found that 75% had visited the West Indies since migrating. 24% attempted to return 'back home' to live in the West Indies with one person maintaining dual residency in both the scheme and in Jamaica. The visits to what I call 'back home', in recognition of the language they used to describe the country of birth, are sporadic. In reality, for most a long gap ensued before re-engagement, although they sent some letters. For example one informant, Mrs. Evans, told me of her attachments to back home. She said, 'my children put money together and bought me tickets to travel. I have been able to go to St. Lucia and help my nephew build a small business so that he can maintain an income'. Mrs. Evans (Appendix A, Figure F) tries to travel as often as she can by alternating her visits between her siblings overseas in America, attending family gatherings. Such connections require maintenance, however, most of my respondents cannot keep up this maintenance because they may not have held strong enough connections to meet up in this way, or they cannot afford to travel due to a lack of finance and lately failing health.

An attempt made by some of my respondents to return back home to live in Jamaica, after living in England for decades proved problematic. Although they retained rights to their family land and were welcomed, they encountered practical difficulties returning to it. In this section, I illustrate that such a return was difficult and unsuccessful. The problem is twofold. First, they became accustomed to life in England and secondly were not part of the fast changing culture and society back home. Their cultural and social worlds therefore came into conflict and a resolution sought. The resolution resulted in a decision to return to England.

Mrs. Baxter provides insight into the other situation where return 'back home' is not considered. Although in theory she can return 'back home' she holds no

intention of moving because she recognised return is not realistic. Such avenues have therefore become what I call 'romantic fantasies' because it is impractical and therefore impossible to facilitate.

She told me,

'Before leaving Jamaica I lived in Clarendon in Jamaica. I never went back and a lot of my family have died. The land is sitting there empty and no one is living on it. Other people might catch on it.<sup>59</sup> Anyway I am not going to return to live in Jamaica. I couldn't anyway because I would need good company.<sup>60</sup> It is there for me because my mother died and left the house to me in the seventies. Now I would have to rebuild the house and extend it or build another one. My son who was born here in England spends a lot of time in Jamaica. He went there on holiday, liked it, so found a cottage to buy in Ocho Rios, in another parish. He keeps asking me to go to Jamaica with him, but I do not feel like travelling now. I am not well.'

It is evident that leaving their home in Jamaica a long time ago and infrequently, or not visiting at all, creates a very big vacuum. The elderly person remembers how Jamaica was a long time ago but it has changed tremendously since they left and it has become an independent country, gaining independence from British rule in 1962, with new political and economic alliances and exploitations. The built environment has changed and the people in the districts that they left are different. So the old familiarities they held about their home became a memory and the reality encountered in a visit is vastly unknown and new. Those that have not returned know there are changes but the result of the change is unknown. Through this process, I therefore suggest that home in Jamaica has become the 'romantic fantasy' far away, and home in England is familiar, routine, regular and safe. 'It could be argued, that many

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<sup>59</sup> Other people, such as family members or others taking advantage of vacant property, may have moved on to the land to occupy it, although this occupancy is insecure.

<sup>60</sup> I need to be in the company of trustworthy, kind people. Her son's house is in another area of Jamaica that is far away from her family land home. He visits Jamaica but has not taken up permanent residency.



respondents returned with a new set of cultural influences and a value system which they expected to be the norm, the realisation that this was not the case has led to disillusionment ... and reflects the psychological dislocation and ambiguity which result when our expectations are at odds with the reality around us' (Abenaty 2001:179).

Therefore, I agree with Helms (1988) who suggested that there are boundaries between places and zones that people live within which are important in the designation of what is safe and unknown. Certainly, my informants have conquered England, the hitherto unknown territory, through travel and settlement. A familiarity has developed in England and it is not a foreign unknown place any longer. Conversely spending long periods away from the West Indies has resulted in it becoming a less familiar place. Therefore, they have changed the known (West Indies/Jamaica) into the unknown, and the unknown (England) into the known and safe through the length of time that they have spent in England. Indeed, they have spent half or a greater percentage of their lives here. This repositioning affects their perception as the local networks become more familiar and personalised. Therefore, engagement with back home becomes difficult, at best, for those who continue to travel there and impossible for those who stay away for long periods.

There are some interesting features about engagement 'back home' that underpin my suggestion that return and engagement are problematic. The example of Mr. Earles (Appendix A, Figure E) highlights this point concerning his return and settlement in a new district to the one he left. He maintained his detached and individual outlook that made resettlement harder.

'When I was young in Jamaica I lived with my mother and father. I knew my paternal grandparents because they lived in the same parish but not their wider kin such as my cousins. I did know my mother's brothers and sisters too because they lived in the district. Then I left for England before getting to know all my brothers and sisters well. Two of my brothers came to England, one died, the other one lives in Birmingham, but I do not know him very much, we did not

correspond much. One sister left Jamaica and went to Canada. The others left back home have passed away.

I came to England to live in the sixties and returned to Jamaica to live after thirty years. I did not go to St. Ann where I grew up. Instead I went to Mandeville. I knew a friend in England who went to Mandeville. I felt this connection would help me to settle better into Jamaica, near him and amongst others like me. I started to build a house that is currently unfinished. It was to have fourteen bedrooms so that I could rent out accommodation, but I could not finish building I because I ran out of money and had no help. Since this was a new location for me and I only knew a friend who had previously relocated there from England it was a place in which I had no other friends or family connection.'

Similarly, Mr. Truman (Appendix A, Figure Q) could not settle in Jamaica because his long-term disengagement had the effect of 'othering' because he could not mitigate the loss that accrued from his separations. Although he did return 'back home' and these visits persuaded him to return to live, after return migration he could not settle. In addition, difficulties arose from another contributory factor that involves the dispersal of family members into other territories whom they visited. These visits affected their ability to travel 'home', so contributed to their infrequent visits 'back home' resulting in them acquiring an 'outsider' status. Mr. Truman explained,

'I did travel to see my family as much as I could. It was about ten years after I came here that I went back to Jamaica for the first time 1971 and spent eight weeks. I went again four years later to attend my father's funeral. In 1991, I visited America and spent eight weeks. In 1993 I went to Canada also for about eight weeks.

So, it was not until 1999 that I went back to Jamaica, almost twenty-four years after my last trip there. I intended to stay but only spent three years there. I enjoyed it when I got there. It was good at first

because it was like being on a long holiday. They seemed to be welcoming. I stayed with my brother who used to live in England but returned home. He has children out there so he is fine. I returned to England because I could not live there. A holiday is OK but I needed my own place.

I realised that England is a better place for me. Although the house, in Norbrook, Kingston is a family home and available for all the family to live in, it was not possible for me to stay there. My father told us not to sell the place because it is a place that we can all come back to, so it remains available to me. But my brothers and their family out there occupy all the space. They made room for me but it was overcrowded. There was really only space for me as a visitor not to live. I did not have my children to help me so they helped me but only so far, I did not want to rely on them because I felt like I was becoming a burden. They were not terrible to me but I just could not fit in. I also needed medicine and treatment for my blood pressure and diabetes. I could not really afford to pay for health care. It is expensive and they do not have the money to help me. We were not on bad terms but I knew it would be better for me to live in England.

Again, Jamaica is a different place, it is not the same place I left and living there is different to visiting. After a while they treat you as a resident but it is better to be treated as a visitor. I had to pay my way, contribute to bills and so on. Everything is expensive and my pension is not that big. I depended on them a lot to cook for me and everything and I felt that could not go on. I felt that it would be better for me to live in England because it is most familiar and I can get a health service and other state benefits. Eventually I felt uncomfortable among a family of strangers.'

It is inevitable that making movements will cause unease so one must 'accept that the generation of new social relations involves instability and volatility' (Strathern 1995:124). Some of my respondents experienced instability and

personal volatility as they responded to the transitions in their lives resulting from migrating and relocating, so experienced turbulence when trying to return home. Although some migrants do make their dream come true and the circulatory migration talked about by Olwig (1999, 2001, 2006, 2007), Wardle (1999) and others is very much alive. Indeed recent work has shown that not all returnees encountered the problems of not being able to fit in, particularly if they have maintained strong family connections, provided financial help and made frequent visits. Sadly, for most of my informants this is not the case.

At present, the local community for my elderly respondents is the vicinity in London where they reside in Brixton. This community is a diverse multi-cultural community with people from various cultures creating a complexity in networks resulting from the merging of multiple cultures. Certainly, my informants interfaced with other groups forming part of an established West Indian migrant community. Their local West Indian community continually seeks to maintain a place in the changing socially complex environment. Consequently, I found that their migration is about displacement, replacement and repositioning similar to other migrants. Concerning integration, I reflect on McGhee (2005), who highlighted issues regarding migrant integration amid fears of 'Muslim terrorism', in a recent government report. McGee recognises the increasing popularity of far right groups like the BNP (The British National Party, a political party representing British values that is accused of being a fascist party) due to increased migration. He further suggests that fear and problems of integration arises because the social order is affected by issues resulting from migration. The extract below from the 'Strength of Diversity Consultation Strategy' sums up the government's response to social cohesion of migrants as follows,

'... old networks based on a sense of place have given way to new and looser networks ...destroying old certainties. We have to acknowledge that change and the sense of instability can create insecurity and fear'. (McGhee 2005:114).

Further, the Home Office suggests,

'To build an integrated society we need to promote an inclusive concept of citizenship, which goes further than the strictly legal definition...underpinned by a sense of shared values, this is one of the main ways in which we can strengthen the relationships and connections between communities.' (Cited in McGhee 2005:120)

Worley (2005) adds that 'community cohesion' has become the new term associated with an assessment framework to address race relations in the UK. It therefore moves the debate beyond multi-culturalism towards the integration and cohesion of different communities that is presently of concern in order to foster understanding and to break down barriers (2005:487). However, Worley suggests that it 'leans to an allegiance to a "phoney" construction of Britishness' (2005:491). Whilst included in the debate concerning Britishness, I suggest that the shift away from a focus on the West Indian migrant community to other newer communities is interesting and affects the position that those like my elderly informants occupy. For they continue to maintain their space as West Indian migrants but also shift position as they jostle to maintain their identity among other migrant groups who now receive attention, whilst their position is not fully resolved. I further explore how my informants feel about being an elderly person in this changing community and how they maintain their cultural identity in the locality. I therefore explore relations between my informants and the state services in chapters 6 and 7 focusing on the issues of exclusion and inclusion.

Within this current debate, there is the recognition among the newer migrants from European countries that is of interest. For on leaving home, return is unlikely, as King and Vullnetari (2006) highlight from the Albanian position concerning loss resulting from migration. They comment that,

'Many retired people have more or less reconciled themselves to the fact that their children will not return; they know that they have settled in their host countries.... Some.... expressed a more ambivalent view – a kind of 'myth of their children's return'. Both from an economic viewpoint and the view that the new country changes their children

(and even more the grandchildren), therefore their return may never happen' (2006:796).

Circulatory migration is also difficult for my retired informants who left parents, their siblings and others behind. Nevertheless, a rare story shows that two elders returned home to reside permanently as a couple, nevertheless turned to England but have differing views on where they want to live. Mr. Baker (Appendix A, Figure C) highlights his thoughts,

'I got married and had children with my wife. I also have children with other women. In all I have six children in Jamaica and six children residing in England.

My wife and I returned to Jamaica to live but due to the death of my son we returned to England. The six children between my wife and I live in England, they were all born here. So we have a big family including grandchildren here. My wife has a heart problem so she is getting treatment. The children do not want us to go back to Jamaica, and my wife is happy to stay here with the family around her.

I would like to return to Jamaica, I feel at home there with my children. I am not ready yet, I love my family here but I long to live in Jamaica and I have the means to do so.'

He felt comfortable to 'return home' for he is integrated into his family network in his original community and has the means to generate an income, unlike others.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, I find the familial structure, ties and connections affected by migration and movement that reduced the kin network, for as many family members moved away and became absent and marginal, families consequently became fragmented. This emerged through investigating my

informants' formative family structures and assessing the impact of migration patterns. I subsequently uncovered that through time and across generations, the patterns and effects of migration repeated. Thus, loss continued with kin dispersed trans-nationally. It is clear that my group of informants are adversely affected by the culture of migration. Migration has caused separations among them and their dispersed kin and ultimately affected their ability to return 'home'. They cannot return 'home' as they have become the 'other' in their place of birth that they cannot withstand. In addition, they cannot afford to return and the local kin networks, family land and households cannot fully support them, although they have the right to return to it and are welcomed, but they cannot afford to develop new homes and supporting structures.

The elderly people have therefore accepted changing their place of belonging, even if it appears to be mainly by what I call, by default. This is because as elderly people they no longer have much ability to work so they have added to their economic migrant status what I will call the 'migrant's planted roots', as their roots multiply through their widening social engagement in new localities and nation states. In some instances, my informants' cut old roots and new ones formed becoming rooted in their new place. This arises from seeking a resting place, a place to belong to and people to help them. For the majority, I suggest that their roots have been disturbed or uprooted and are being repositioned. This repositioning stated simply is complex because it is associated with the elongated pain of loss and dislocation from their homeland and kin. The notion of personal identity emerging from occupational space tied with their culture-building process in the West Indies (Besson 1979, 1988, 1999a, 2002) is applicable here as they occupy a new space. Therefore, I propose that my informants' occupational place has changed because of their migration, settlement and dispersed familial network. Accordingly, the culture-building process continues in England where they reside and get their needs met with the help of state provisions, although there are wider issues regarding inclusion. Therefore, their disengagement from the institution of family land as a process enabling rooting to a place and to kin has weakened so 'back home' and attachment to it is held as a 'romantic' notion. The 'back home' place left to other family members who relate to the established concept of family land that

Simey (cited in Barrow 1996), Davenport (1961), Besson (1979, 1988, 1999b, 2002), and Olwig (1997, 1999, 2002, 2005) suggest.

Although modernity and the globalisation process brought cheaper and easier ways to connect with another person in another country, problems remain concerning the maintenance of kin ties. The British state becomes a more prominent feature of their lives and affects their identity as they become increasingly individualised and the family fragmented. In chapter 5 I uncover how family associations became differentiated by gender and positions the men and women in this research differently within the family context and contemporary society. Their relationship with the state is investigated in chapters 6 and 7, here I uncover how both genders find their position within England and engage with the state to bring about change as they assert their sense of belonging.



## Chapter 5

### **The impact of movement: family relations and gender differences**

#### Introduction

'I have two daughters but we are not close. I wish it was different but I don't get any help from my children.'

The above quote, from Mr. Truman, highlights the separation, I found generally, between my male informants and their children. In addition to identifying in the previous chapters that my elderly informants form a differentiated and multi-faceted group with a fragmented familial structure, in this chapter, I show how gender is another important aspect of their difference. I uncover how the gender differences arose for my informants pertaining to their connections with their own children to understand how it affects their sense of belonging. There are therefore three main concerns of this chapter. First, following on from the differences identified in chapter 4, concerning the family of orientation and my informants' link with extended kin, I turn to looking at the relationships formed between my informants and their family of procreation and extended kin. Secondly, I explore the actual family relations to uncover the result of the historical connections that underpin the familial gender patterns resulting from their kinship structure. Thirdly, I also uncover the link found between the gender differentiations that emerge in relation to the concept of the matrifocal family. I utilise the anthropological constructs of kinship and gender relations to process these concerns and use information contained in the 16 genealogy charts in addition to my informants' narratives. (See genealogy charts in Appendix A).

I found that my informants, as a group, repeated the same procreation patterns as their parents' generation, as outlined in the beginning of chapter 2 and addressed in chapter 4, expressed in figure 13 on page 118. The second column in figure 13 shows the childbearing status of my informants' parents, and the third column highlights my informants' links with their parents and grandparents. In this chapter I therefore explore the similarities between the

generations concerning relationships, procreation and the maintenance of familial bonds. Thus, I examine my informants' childbearing status and kin ties, particularly focusing on the relations between my informants their children and grandchildren to establish how these ties affect a sense of belonging. Indeed, Grundy (2006), from her work concerning migration and older people in the Albanian context, suggests this link is important stating, 'older people report family ties as central elements of their lives ... it is therefore important to consider trends and differentials in the availability of different family members, particularly children' (2006:114). Similarly, I found it crucial to establish the links between my informants and their children because this is a vital place for contact. The contact between parents and children provides an arena for socialisation and enables the elder to receive support. As a result the relationship between my informants and their children also contributes to how they feel about themselves as well as serving to establish to whom and where they belong.

Emotional attachments are important and for long-term migrants. Indeed Erikson (2004) commenting on Caribbean migration suggested,

'Nomadism and nomadic thought are spatial concepts deriving from Latin and Greek roots of words for pasture and wandering pastoral people. These words apply to the Caribbean as its people migrate, taking up life in European and other metropolises. They imply an opposition between the state of movement and sedentariness, not necessarily physical movement, but a state of mind that fosters between cultures, languages and ways of thinking'.

This highlights the complex nature of migration because not only do people physically move place they also make internal adjustments in their emotional response to the movement. Here, I am further concerned with the emotional effects of the movement, not that act of moving alone.

*Circumstances behind movement into the scheme*

To address the first question in this chapter pertaining to my informants' relations with their children, I look at how their housing requirements as single household occupants arose. From assessing the reasons my informants moved into the scheme interesting gender differences emerge. My informants moved into the scheme because they were in need of support, previously living in unsatisfactory accommodation. They were also in need of help to maintain their well-being. Figure 15 highlights the problems that caused them to move into the scheme, shown in relation to gender.

Relationship breakdown	Failing health and home in disrepair	Failing health accommodation too big	Loss of own house	To be nearer to family	From renting a room	Return to England from Jamaica	Homeless due to family issues
3	3	2	5	2	5	4	2
<b>Gender</b>							
<b>M 1</b>	<b>M 0</b>	<b>M 0</b>	<b>M 3</b>	<b>M 1</b>	<b>M 4</b>	<b>M 3</b>	<b>M 0</b>
<b>F 2</b>	<b>F 3</b>	<b>F 2</b>	<b>F 2</b>	<b>F 1</b>	<b>F 1</b>	<b>F 2</b>	<b>F 1</b>

**Figure 15** *Direct circumstances leading to the move into the scheme*

First, women mainly entered the sheltered housing scheme because of a combination of health related housing issues due to their hitherto damp and poor housing conditions, exacerbating their ill health. Second, as a result mainly women occupied burdensome accommodation because it became too large for them on their own. Third, many men rented inappropriate rooms, as a consequence of relationship breakdown, residing in premises that were both in poor condition and did not suit their health and support needs. Both men and women required better homes and more supportive environments. Fourth, there was a need for accommodation on return from Jamaica after having sold their house to return 'home'. Similarly, both men and women came into this category but there was a slightly higher tendency for men to fit this need, attempting a

return to live in Jamaica. Fifth, two households moved into the scheme to be near their family to give and receive support, equally weighted by gender.

As poor migrants they purchased homes that were in need of repair that they could not undertake, therefore, my sixth point highlights that due to the loss of homes that one-fifth of my informants purchased, they became homeless, a circumstance affecting men and women. These homes were in the poor areas of Brixton that underwent gentrification and were in need of repair so designated as unfit for human habitation, similar to findings by Owen (2001:75) that migrants occupied poor housing. The council purchased my informants' former homes under compulsory purchase orders and they received other local authority housing, or were left with insufficient funds to purchase another property. Therefore they re-entered the insecure rental market from which they moved into the scheme to access secure accommodation, better suited to their well-being. Both men and women experienced this loss, with a slightly higher tendency of men falling into this category. However, men moved on to independent accommodation whereas women initially moved with their children. Seventh, both men and women similarly cited moving due to their relationship breakdown and one female informant moved due to a combination of other family issues. Overall, I found that my informants did not reside with their children but lived in single units because their children had already fled the nest long ago, a few moving overseas. Indeed, their children had moved out to nuclear units thereby providing evidence of creolisation, accepting the state can provide personal assistance to their parents rather than being solely a family responsibility. However, my male informants' weaker links with their children are too insignificant to support them, so they become more dependent on the state than their female counterparts.

Figure 16 shows their relationship status and the relationship links my female and male informants have with their children.

Informant	Age	Currently Married	Divorced	Widowed	Separated	With partner	Single	Link with children
Mr. Bailey	82		*					Marginal
Mr. Baker	75	*			*			Good
Mrs. Baker (a)	73	*			*			Good
Mrs. Baker (b)	70							Good
Mrs. Beaver	75			*			*	N/A <sup>61</sup>
Mrs. Chambers	71			*		*		N/A <sup>62</sup>
Ms. Duncan	73							N/A
Mrs. Eaton	65			*				Fair
Mrs. Elgin	83				*			Good
Mr. Earles	75	*						Marginal
Mrs. Evans	70		*					Good
Mr. Griffiths	85			*				Marginal
Mrs. Harris	73		*					Good
Mr. Harvey	72		*					Marginal
Mr. James	86			*				Marginal
Mrs. Jarvis	83			*				Good
Mrs. Jones	71		*					Good
Mrs. Mason	65		*					Fair
Mr. Melvin	74			*				Fair
Mr. Mitchell	60						*	Fair
Mrs. Parker	76		*					Fair & good
Mr. Taylor	74							Marginal
Mr. Truman	83		*					Marginal
Mrs. Scott	84			*				Fair
Mr. Smith	66		*					Marginal
Mr. White	74		*					Marginal

**Figure 16** *Link with children, relationship status and gender differences*

Key:- Good =Having engaging relations  
 Fair=Having partial relations with some children, sometimes  
 Marginal=Having very strained minimal contact to no contact

The assessment of the data in the above table, Figure 16, shows that although there was a high incidence of marriage among my informants there was also a

<sup>61</sup> She does not have children.

<sup>62</sup> She has a good relationship with his partner's children.

high rate of divorce, just below half those who married, separated, led to separate households and ultimately sole occupancy. Although widowed, half of my female widows expressed a release after their partner passed away indicating that the relationship was a strain. Half of my male informants were divorced when their children were very young so they never lived with their children for significant periods. In addition, two of my male informants engaged in extra-marital affairs and never lived in the same household with the children born in these relationships. It is therefore apparent from the table above, Figure 16, that men are significantly separated from their children because of their relationship breakdown. The continued movement of men from one home to another created instability in their familial relationships and eventually they ended up living alone.

The above table also shows that there were 14 women in this study, 3 women were childless. Of the 11 with children, three-quarters had good relations with their children and one-quarter less favourable. Therefore, all of my female informants had relationships with their children and overall the majority of these were good.

There were 12 men who all had children but in contrast only one said he had a good relationship with his children. Almost one-quarter had fair relations with their children and three-quarters had marginal relations with their children.

One elderly female informant has a male partner but he does not live in the scheme with her and they do not have children together, having met 10 years ago. Four people are still married but separated, one couple Mr. Baker and Mrs. Baker live in the scheme in separate flats. One male respondent's wife lives in Jamaica with their young children. One female informant is still married, but separated from her husband who lives elsewhere in Brixton.

### *Kinship, social organisation and gender relations*

In response to the gender differences, I found that men generally had looser contact and were more isolated from their children than my female informants.

This is in contrast to recent findings by Bauer and Thompson (2006) who found that in general, when a father is absent but 'owns up ... exchanges photographs and sends occasional money and gifts to his children, his behaviour is regarded as acceptable' (2006:7). At times, this link occurred between my male informant and their children but not as strongly maintained. Alternatively, Bauer and Thompson (2006) found 'fathers living with their children in over half of the households' (2006:111) in their study. This connection was less strong and enduring in my research. However, Mr. Baker (Appendix A, Figure C) has a visible emotional and social involvement with his children but estrangement was common among other males. He is therefore a family orientated man and told me that,

'I go out of my way to make sure my children, their mother and myself stayed together as a family when they were growing up. I made sure they were prepared to face the outside world and the difficulties out there'

The story of Mr. Baker's experience serves to highlight the connections between the generations that helped him to maintain links with his younger generation, and make him feel that he has played a specific role during his life cycle that he hopes his children will follow. He developed a vision for his offspring, through his contact and social engagement although his familial structure involves children from extra-marital affairs. Mr. Baker, a tall strong looking, well built man, was always very well dressed. He is sociable and talked with his neighbours. He smiled a lot and was always busy with his family. He enjoyed going out with his children to watch the black theatre productions from Jamaica that tour England. He occasionally attended the dominoes sessions at the scheme. However, his wife said he did not share her passion of church going. He and Mrs. Baker are still married, though separated they maintain a reasonably good relationship and both have very supportive and engaging children and grandchildren. Although a diabetic with high blood pressure and being recently unwell, he remained active. He explained to me his current circumstances and his status,

'I am 75 years old and I moved into this scheme a year ago. I live in this scheme in a flat opposite my wife's flat. Mrs. Baker and I had returned to live in Jamaica but came back to England after the death of one of our sons. I am still very upset by his death I cannot bring myself to talk about it really. Mrs. Baker remained here and never returned to Jamaica but I returned to run the family business. My father started a butchery<sup>63</sup> business and I took this over when I went back to live in Jamaica after he died. I love living in Jamaica and spending time there. I also have other children in Jamaica with another woman so I hope to eventually return to Jamaica. My focus is in Jamaica where I would prefer to live because I would not like to die in England but my children here do not want me to leave and go to Jamaica to live.

I have been advised to keep active and mobile so I make sure I get out. I am very busy anyway with my grandchildren. I help my daughter by picking my grandchildren up from school and bringing them here to look after them until later when my daughter picks them up. I love being involved with my family and helping them.

I am retired but I have a son who works in the building trade so some days I still go out on to the building site with him. I enjoy a good relationship with my children and we share family celebrations together. There are many of us so we use the larger common lounge area where there is a bigger space to fit us all in. We celebrate birthdays together, and all who live locally come.'

I observed his flat to be homely and his lounge furnished with a sofa suite, table and cupboards. He uses his kitchen often to cook food for his family who eat with him and Mrs. Baker, after work on weekdays, and at weekends. He possesses the necessary domestic gadgets but cooking is mostly undertaken in Mrs. Baker's flat. I must say their food is nice for whenever I visited I was

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<sup>63</sup> The butchery refers to an abattoir.



welcomed to dine with them and I was very keen to do so. Mr. Baker clearly benefited from taking a central role along with his wife, in his family in London. He provides leadership and support to his children and is respected and honoured by them. I observed them to be close knit and lovingly involved in each other's daily lives. Mr. Baker is a father and grandfather role model through both nurturing and socialising with family. This is a rarity for men in my research sample, who were often absent from the household where their children lived creating an absence of these bonds and a clear male elderly status.

Mrs. Baker, (Appendix A, figure D), also expressed her feelings towards her family when she said to me,

'I am very pleased to be around my children especially when I look around and see that a lot of people do not live good with their children. My children would do anything for us I tell you they are really good.

When I was ill everyone looked after me and they also do the same for their father. My children still ask my advice about difficulties they have with their children and I advise them. It is good to be part of a large family because I am never alone.'

Whenever I went to see Mrs. Baker she was never alone. Her home filled with her children or grandchildren who were very responsive and conversational with me. I observed her with one of her granddaughters who visited her whilst I was talking to Mrs. Baker. She told me,

'My grandmother is cool. I sometimes ask her advice about things and she gives me good advice. I like coming here to see her and to get anything she wants at the shops. Sometimes we go shopping together. Or I just hang around and watch television with her. I am at university doing a media and communication course so I am on my

summer break. I will be going to work later but I came to visit my gran this morning.'

Mr. Baker and Mrs. Baker (Appendix A, Figures C and D) share equal access to their children and their children show them equal respect. Although separated they are very much brought together because of their children for they maintain a close relationship with them. There is a strong focus on family togetherness influenced by the Christian faith of Mrs. Baker and the family orientation from Mr. Baker. Although he does not attend church, he has a strong focus on togetherness that permeates through their daily lives and helps to keep them bonded.

Mrs. Jarvis and her family links provide an insight into the closer associations that I found between most of my female informants and their children. (Although Mrs. Jarvis spoke to me about her relations with her children, she did not provide sufficient family detail to produce a genealogy chart.) Mrs. Jarvis told me,

'I have four children, three daughters and one son. One of my daughters lives in America and the rest live here in England. One of my daughters and my only son both live in north London and they make sure that I am alright. They make it their duty to visit me every week, do my shopping for me and help me with my laundry. My daughter will make sure my hair is looking nice and when possible they come to hospital with me. I attend the hospital for dialysis every week and I get picked up by the hospital ambulance. My daughter just finished redecorating my flat, look at the lovely curtains she put up in here for me.

They both want me to move to north London into a scheme like this, closer to their homes because it would be easier for them to visit me. But I do not want to move, really, this is my home. I do not want to be a burden to them. I use to go and stay with them occasionally for a week at a time. Unfortunately when I last stayed with my son I fell

down the stairs. The stairs in his house are very narrow and steep and I cannot manage them. So staying in his house is difficult and dangerous. I am best in my flat where everything is easier to use.'

Her daughter told me,

'In respect for mummy we can't speak to her anyhow because she is the 'big Mama' of the family. She is my role model because she bought me up and supported me in bringing up my children. So I look to her for direction in my life. It is my job now to make sure she is alright and to look out for her because she has done her job with us. She has shown me what to do in life and as I get older I am learning from her how to play my role in my family.'

Her role is clearly identified and her influence on her family is great. Similarly, Mrs. Evans, who attained a leadership position, suggested that it is the role of elderly people to give advice and support to children and grandchildren, to assess their needs to see how they cope and to give them inspiration. She told me how she obtained her position.

'I am in my late sixties and I am involved with my grandchildren and I take them to Brixton Library, the War Museum and to church because I play a role in educating and disciplining them. Through explaining with evidence the reason for my reprimands I improve their self-confidence. I also learn from them, for example, I watch the new films such as Lord of the Rings and other activities the youngsters engage with. I also played a role in teaching and helping them to read. My children sent my grandchildren to stay with me in their school holidays so that they did not mix with other local children who swear and misbehave. I was therefore central in playing a guiding role in shaping the values instilled into them and I ensured that I created a moral code in them. I made sure my children were aware of how to act spiritually and culturally according to certain procedures by guiding them from bad things and motivating and

instructing them academically. At the same time, I encouraged their faith by giving them advice, on request, about the scriptures. I believe that it takes more than one person to bring up a child, so I helped. I remember my grandmother's statement and passed it on to my family by telling them to always reach up high for anything. So I tell them this to motivate them.'

Mrs. Evans believes her inspiration, encouragement, and setting an example, are of primary importance. She accepts herself as being the elderly head of her family because she is divorced and their father appears absent from the picture. Certainly, he is absent from her world. Her walls decorated with pictures of her children and grandchildren in ordinary clothes and graduation gowns. She influenced them through her vision of life passed to her by her grandmother. Her family therefore held together through their female inter-generational influence. As well as continuing their sense of individuality that is culturally determined as highlighted in chapter 4. I suggest Mrs. Evans continues to support her family who appear to respect her elderly wisdom. However, regarding herself as an elderly woman, she wants to remain independent because she does not now see her elder status as a reason to burden her children. She is most concerned with being a strong example to them and remaining active and useful to them, similar to Mr. Baker.

Interestingly, there is a strong sense of my elderly informants needing to remain independent and strong. As a result, in my view their elderliness is not synonymous with weakening or weakness but a greater source of strength. However, some of the elderly people do not engage in such supportive relationships. There are some elderly people who experienced heightened individualisation by falling into the position of being alone due to familial separation, rather than choosing it out of their own ability to function as a sole unit with confidence.

In opposition to this centralised powerful and respected location of my female informants, I mostly find a marginalised location for the men. A touching example highlights the lack of caring given by children, therefore needs remain

unmet resulting in a total reliance on others and the state for help with daily life tasks. Mr. Truman, (Appendix A, figure Q) who is estranged from his children, is reliant on the state. He expressed his concerns to me saying,

'I have two daughters but we are not close. I wish it was different but I don't get any help from my children. This is because one of my daughters hardly knows me because I left the house in Lewisham when she was young. After I left I did not keep in touch with her. I do not think she knows where I live, since I moved in here. My other daughter from a different relationship lives very close to this scheme but I rarely see her. My relationships did not work out and I left so I really lost out with my children. I have one granddaughter but I do not get to play granddaddy. I am really out of the loop. It is sad but I cannot do anything about it, it is too late now, so I am having a tough time.'

Similarly Mr Bailey (Appendix A, figure A), states,

'I moved from my uncle's place and went to live in Kingston. I met a woman there, had my first son with her. She was Chinese and it was difficult to get in with their families but because I was of good standing she introduced me to them. We stayed together a little while but our marriage soon ended. She then left Jamaica and went to live in Canada with our son. I only knew him as a toddler before he left Jamaica. We wrote letters to each other but did not see each other for almost forty years. He has two children with his wife. One of his children, my granddaughter travels to study at a London University doing a course at Imperial College. When she is here she visits me and sometimes stays with me. She will look after me and cook my dinner. I go for walks with her. I look forward to her coming. She is more attentive to me than my children born in this country. I hardly see them. I hope her brother decides to come and visit me soon.'

Before leaving Jamaica I had a relationship with another woman and had two more children, but the relationship did not last. My ex-partner and our two children went to live in America. We wrote letters to each other but I did not see them for forty years until I went to America a few years ago.'

In addition, a striking view emerged concerning attachment by Mr. Bailey, referring to one daughter, saying,

'as they grow up the attachment lessens .... All she has to do is call but maybe she feels that I am too independent<sup>64</sup>, I sometimes wonder if anything goes wrong to explain why she is so standoffish, she does not believe it is her duty to do something for me'.

Similarly, Mr. Melvin spends a lot of time alone although three of his children reside in England and live in London. He says that they are independent but do visit him and give him money sometimes. He says that he does not want to get in their way 'because they are young and want to be with young people'. However, I detect that this is a bit of a mask to cover up his disappointment, for although he says that he does not 'want to be a burden to them', it is clear he would prefer to be closer to them. So while he told me that when invited to spend Christmas with his son, he told him that he had someone coming to see him and stayed home alone. It became clear that he did not have a visitor and his excuse masked true difficulties in actually spending time with his family. I conclude that this type of distancing is deep rooted. Nevertheless, he feels a deeper connection to one of his daughters in Jamaica, and he told me he believed that she would visit him if he was very sick and needed help. (I am not sure if this belief is a wish as opposed to reality).

Indeed, Mr. Truman is bold, stating that he feels used financially, for he remembers that when he moved into the scheme he asked one of his daughters for help. Unfortunately, this did not work well because he says that,

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<sup>64</sup> I think this interpretation is his way of making excuses for he did not appear to maintain close contact with his children as they grew up into adulthood.

'when I moved in here I was given a grant of £395 and I made it up to £500. I asked my daughter, Mary, to buy some things from the catalogue but she only bought curtains. She kept the rest of the money and I believe she used it to repair her car'.

He informed me that sometimes his daughter would ask him to lend her money but acknowledged that she did not help him financially.

Interestingly, one female informant is involved in a difficult relationship with her children, similar to many of my male informants, and retains an ambivalent connection with them. The striking story of Mrs. Mason highlights tragic loss associated with her separation from her husband. Here, as a female elder she occupies an interesting position resulting from her life experiences. The repetitive cycle of abuse and separation has left her a fatigued, weary and lost elderly woman who constantly seeks solace rather than enjoying retirement or movement into elderhood. This is because her children do not respond to her elderly status in any specific way consequently, as she matures her ageing holds little significance. Mrs. Mason is in her mid sixties and is recently retired. She is in fairly good health although she suffers from high blood pressure. Mrs. Mason wears a weary, tired, and upset frown on her face because her life is filled with disappointments that seem to have started at the beginning of her life. She experienced an abusive childhood and is estranged from her family. Mrs. Mason explained how she ended up feeling tormented and a failure as an elderly mother.

'I came to England to escape my horrific experiences. However, I continued to have horrific experiences within my marriage and with my children. I met my husband in England and we married and had four children. The marriage deteriorated and we slept in different rooms until I left the home. I left after my daughter gave birth to a child that was for my husband. I would have left anyway because my husband was terrible and we were not living good.

I moved out and two of my sons came with me but one soon moved on to separate accommodation. Later, my eldest son who stayed with his father left and went to live in Birmingham. This left my daughter, husband and their child in the house. I worked hard, even working rather than taking my holiday, as an orderly in the NHS and bought a house with my youngest son who stayed with me. I managed to pay off the mortgage and looked forward to retiring with a pension. Then, my son met an English woman and moved into her flat with her and her two teenage children and they soon added two more children to their family. However, they were evicted from the flat for rent arrears so my son moved his family into our small house with only two bedrooms. They began to sell and throw out my furniture and in agreement that the house was too small for us all, the house was sold. My son did not give me an equal share as he took most of the money and purchased a house for his family. I was homeless once again and went to stay with my daughter sleeping on her sofa. This was difficult because we did not have a good relationship. I applied as homeless to the council and accepted a flat in the sheltered housing scheme.

To add salt to my wounds I am continuously lending money to two of my sons who live in London. I also borrow money from the bank to lend to them. This means that sometimes I do not have enough money to eat or to pay my debts, so I work through a temp agency as a cleaner in the NHS. I find this job tiring and I have an awkward journey home late at night that worries me. So I live in fear.

I feel ashamed and I am fed up and depressed because I am back at square one, renting, family torn apart and not close or loving, and I am poor and struggling. I can see my ex work colleagues enjoying their retirement and I feel uncomfortable when I am with them, so I rarely visit them and I do not invite them to my home. I do not want anyone to find out about my situation or what happened in my family. I only have this dining table from my house, and one of the chairs is



damaged. I had to buy a bed, coffee table, television, curtains and the Scheme Manager gave me two armchairs. '

Although clean and tidy, her flat is cold and sparse, mirroring her broken heart that is lacking love and care. Mrs. Mason told me she wants to obtain a mortgage to buy her own home so that she could move out because living in the scheme reminds her of her ill-fated life. Tragically, this is not possible but she will not accept it. She equates the scheme with a provision for 'old people' who are 'unable' and 'on their last legs' and where one will spend their 'last days'. Ironically, she does not see it as a place for herself. Alternatively, more importantly, cannot accept it, for it would mean accepting so much more about the circumstances leading up to her residency. Consequently, Mrs. Mason feels let down by herself and her children and says,

'I think my daughter blames me for what happened to her<sup>65</sup> and my sons take more from me than they give me. Now that I need help they will not do for me what I did and still do for them'.

At Christmas, I visited her. I found that she spent Christmas alone because her family did not have joint gatherings or become involved in each other's households, although she is occasionally asked to baby sit for one son and his wife. Moreover, she does not get on with his wife because she says, 'she is lazy and is the cause of the financial problems that burden me'. She also told me that she was disappointed that he married a white English woman.

Mrs. Mason therefore spends time alone and finds it difficult to engage with fellow residents. However, Mrs. Parker gives her some clothes and shared a meal occasionally. She confided in me that she appreciates the gifts, but felt ashamed that she was unable to buy her own clothes. In addition, the kindness received made her uncomfortable because she did not want to appear as a 'charity case' for she does not have anything to give. She often went out with Mrs. Parker and Girlie on shopping trips and bus rides to different areas of

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<sup>65</sup> This is referring to the incest experienced by her daughter from her father.

London. Although Mrs. Mason does not buy clothes she enjoys the excursions and social time. She belongs to a spiritualist church and finds solace in it, but it cannot heal her wounds as she remarks,

'I told my children about my childhood so that they would understand and they said 'poor mum'. But, they are a burden rather than support and I want peace but I blame myself because I gave my money to my children and now I feel alone, unsupported and 'stuck' and I cannot continue with my life like this. I am in between, ducking and diving through my life. My situation is like walking across Niagara Falls and stopping in the middle, where the only way is down. I am tired now and cannot go on walking any longer because my situation is wearing me down.'

Mrs. Mason was very friendly towards me and confided in me. She trusted me a lot and I felt she poured her soul out to me because I was a good listener although I had nothing to offer her. It was this that I think was most important, I was just there, I heard her pain, she could explore her feelings with me and perhaps I was part of her consoling and healing. I was fortunate to give this to her free of judgement but filled with kindness. Ironically, it was kindness that she wanted from her own family, but only got from outsiders, for she had an uncomfortable central inside position in her own family and became both paradoxically vital and marginal in it.

Mrs. Mason says that she has always worked very hard but she feels very hard up now, and is working harder than she did before she retired. She seems riddled with disempowerment yet has the resilience to survive. She experienced betrayal, guilt, anger, despair with dreamy hope that kept her going. She is torn and unsettled because she has, in her words, 'love for the almost unlovable' and struggles daily so she does not have any peace. Mrs. Mason says that she feels 'bitter'. She is angry with her son who sold the house but she cannot hate him because she recognises that they have been through a lot together. If anything, she feels sorry for him and his situation.

Reflecting on the whole pattern of kin ties, I wondered, how gendered differences arose among my informants in their families? An understanding of kinship formation becomes an important consideration so that I can assess the impact that movement from migration and the family household has on my informants' kinship structure in relation to gender, as well as allowing me to assess the presenting insecurities that result.

### *Kinship structure and gender relations*

Gender differences were addressed in the previous assessments of the West Indian kinship system that I presented on page 49 in chapter 2, where Besson's (1979, 2002) assessment of kinship and gender asserts that both genders are treated the same, with inheritance being equal between genders.

In terms of acknowledging the gender differences Besson also found 'gender flexibility' in the Jamaican village of Martha Brae stating that 'gender divisions of labour, are, however, tendencies, rather than rules' (2002:200). Besson found that the household provided the social environment for females as well as the church, while cultivation, rearing larger livestock and taking wage-labour outside the village were undertaken by men. However, women cultivated household gardens and often sold the produce at markets to gain an income in addition to taking wage-labour. As a result, women also performed important associated agricultural tasks. Men socialised outside the house yard, played dominoes and drank with their peers. Perhaps the aforementioned tendency towards gender equality and shared economic ability affects the gendered kin positions.

The gender differences that I uncovered lean towards a female gender bias in relation to maintaining kin contact resulting from my female informants' centrality in the household. In order to understand the effect of the gender differences and matrifocality I therefore examine the interface of the wider social structure, influence of migration, movement and the personal insecurities, from which an answer emerges.

Helpful here is Keesing's (1975) interpretation of kinship formation in relation to gender. Keesing cites Aberle, Rubel and Pastner (1975:25) who suggested that there is a process of association between gender, descent and the male-dominated division of labour. This finding is useful because it links an understanding of kinship and gender within the social structure. My elderly informants are part of a moving cultural lifestyle with wide ranging social circumstances and continually adapt their culture as a response to external circumstances and the global economy. Therefore, I wondered how my informants' links with their children developed a matrifocal rather than patrifocal tendency.

My older female informants have developed specific roles within their family whilst most of my male informants have not. However, this role is one that has interesting complex wider implications. Indeed, Chamberlain (2001) cites Sutton who suggested that female power in the family emerged by 'default'. However, Chamberlain suggests a lineage focus is important because a tradition rather than dysfunction is being carried on as an organising principle (2001:46). Alternatively, perhaps the specific roles men played, as suggested by Barrow (1998), refute the structural-functionalists' claim of male marginality and peripheral location, suggesting the focus on their family of orientation and procreation forwarded by Greenfield rendered some male ties as invisible, such as brothers and uncles (1998:341).

However, I have found some applicability of the structural-functionalist gaze in this chapter, acknowledging male closeness to siblings occurred but it was not very pronounced as indicated in chapter 3 because sibling contact remains low, although an uncle helped a male and a female informant. For example, Mr. Bailey (Appendix A, figure A) was helped in his formative years by his uncle. Nevertheless, I found my female informants emerged as mother, worker, homemaker, partner and sole carer. These elements are inclusive of both male and female roles in the absence of the male partner. As my female informants moved through these major roles that also become combined in their position in the family, they assume a single position at the head of the family. I refer to this as the females' 'dual gender' position, and suggest it creates a paradox, for a

question arises, that asks, is there a place for the male in the household? Or most interestingly, is this the shaping of the male position by default? Indeed the lack of appearance of the male becomes the norm for the family relation and he is positioned as 'absent'.

I believe this scenario occurs and creates a paradox in terms of gender roles in the family because my female informants merged male roles into the female role. However, surely this represents an incongruity to the notion of kinship. For if kinship is about procreation relationships and developing bonds through generational links then this family pattern is the opposite for it mostly represents generational loss for the male father to kinship ties. I therefore found the male position often placed as an outsider. Consequently, I agree with Wilson (1973) that the socialisation of men is different to that of women as men are more inclined to socialise with other men outside of the family home.

Schweitzer (2000) highlighted that the study of kinship has changed in both importance to anthropological discovery and as a framework of analysis that is important to my discussion. From the beginning kinship study focused on non-euroamericans who were seen as the other and it was assumed that kinship did not play a role in industrial or modern societies. Schweitzer (2000) cites Goody's comparative 'trilogy' on kinship in Asia, Africa and Europe, within the tradition of descent theory from post-Second World War Cambridge anthropology suggesting that this marked a turning point in expanding and reviving the notion of kinship. However, it emerged that the study of personhood at times replaced the struggling field of kinship. The focus on personhood therefore became a central focus of kinship analysis that I too explored regarding my informants, assessing their gender and kinship relations.

It has been noted that a number of feminist scholars, social historians, Marxists, materialist and historical analysts have widened the concept of kinship by treating the social relations of kinship within a wider framework of relations. This is because it became associated with diachronic aspects of social inequality, the economy and power relations. Thus 'ideological' aspects of kinship are used to express relations generated from the growth and

organisation of society (Schweitzer 2000:10-13). My focus on kinship is situated within this context. For in this chapter I sought to understand the social relations of my informants and their family members. Relations emerged within the development of the West Indian family and globalisation context arising from their culture of migration. Indeed, it was one of my male informants, Mr. Truman (Appendix A, Figure Q), that connected their present circumstances with wider influences by highlighting,

‘...we are a funny set of people. I do not know where we get our system but it must have something to do with where we come from.’

Of course, where my informants come from is of vital importance, so I draw upon unpacking this journey. It is useful that kinship study has moved away from studying a part of society to the whole and from procreation alone to looking at the cultural meanings of relations. I am therefore influenced by Collier and Yanagisako (1989b), who argue that the strength of kinship analysis lay in focusing on the process of reproduction and construction of gender and personhood, looking at how kinship systems are involved in the social processes and shaped by them. Consequently, kinship is increasingly discussed in the context of these processes for,

‘... it is the residential structure of the community which determines the nature of kinship relations ... It would rather appear that, although many other relations are expressed in the idiom of kinship the kinship relationship itself is dependent on the spatial proximity or distance between the participants in the relationship’ (Collier and Yanagisako 1987b:115).

Therefore, the community structure determines kinship ties in conjunction with family members. However, the distance between members is also an important influencing factor in kinship structures and is clearly a determining factor for the maintenance of kinship ties for my informants. So too is the economic ability to overcome the distance.

This therefore suggests both the community and distance between people are powerful kinship determinants. In relation to looking at movement, power and kinship, I draw on Mader and Gippelhauser's study of the Dravidian kinship system in India within Shaur and Achuar society. Mader and Gippelhauser stated, 'Kinship emerges as an integral part of a society in constant movement, characterised by a high degree of individualism and adaptability to change...the loose kinship rules and fluctuating political groupings do not represent a lack of social organisation but an organising principle' (cited in Schweitzer 2000:18). This suggests that individualisation results from the kinship structure that formed through adapting to the changing power structure that gave it form. Similarly, I found that the familial structure of my elderly informants subject to changes that occurred within the historical context and that both individuals and the state influenced the kinship ties and relationships, as expressed in chapter 2. In addition, as stated in chapter 4, my informants express a high degree of individualism or personalised focus that result from the influences involved in forming their kinship structure. Mr. Harvey (Appendix A, figure I) reflects the complex process of migration and movement within West Indian culture and the experience of my informants adapting to these changes, he stated,

'I am a quiet person and I keep myself to myself. I do not go to pubs or bars, in fact I don't drink. Anyway I have to be careful of what I eat too because I have stomach problems. I can look after myself and cook. I was glad that I joined the army when I was younger because I learnt to look after myself very well and rely on myself. I don't need a woman to do things for me but I would like the company because it does get lonely being on my own. But I am used to it now anyway. I had a tough time when I was growing up in Jamaica. I enjoyed being with my mother and grandmother. But I spent a lot of time alone. I have not really had a close relationship with anyone else in my family. I was married for a very short time so I have been on my own a lot.

Therefore I think a lot of Jamaican men lack confidence and this is a problem for us. I have got a lot of confidence in the time I have been

in this country. I do not keep friends much because it is hard to trust other people. I think this is also a problem for all of us, it keeps us apart.'

This sense of separation between people, related to issues of confidence and trust, becomes an important feature affecting the bonding and maintenance of relationships. Perhaps this affects the male bond with children, especially as other issues compound the complexity regarding bonding.

The chart of Mr. Bailey (Appendix A, Figure A) highlights the repeated fragmented connection to his own children that he experienced with his father, so his kinship links are minimal and very weak and he is quite isolated. His children dispersed into multiple households with separations into different countries, as well as their residency in England. Therefore, such elderly men have a complex web in which there were many family units or households. Yet, they are marginal to them all. The patterns of gendered relations created impacts on the elderly men from all kinship angles. I show the male absence in their children's households in the charts of Mr. Earles and Mr. Truman (Appendix A, Figures E and Q). These experiences underpin the fragility and marginal impact afforded to them, even where they may have lived with their children but left them when relationships ended.

Men who moved in and out of households eventually became absent from them all, therefore deep kinship bonds did not form with children. However, a greater bond occurred between my female informants and their children, although they too may not reside with all of their children. Separation occurred in two ways, first from the breakdown of a relationship as well as from migration.

The example of Mrs. Parker (Appendix A, Figure M) highlights that she had children in Jamaica before migrating and her children remained there when she left. Although such separation often occurred before migration when they moved away to find work and establish a relationship that proved to be short-lived, similar to my male informants, but they maintain better connectivity. However, the quality of this female connection varies.



Mrs. Parker's story about her family links highlights the fragmentations, frustrations and disappointment that travel and separation created between her, and her children and their families. Mrs. Parker, a tall woman with a cheerful, smiling face walked upright and proud as she came to sit on a chair next to me. She happily started to pass on to me information regarding her family without further prompting as we sat engaged in conversation. She told me she is in her seventies and in good health. In recognition of this she said that the doctors at the hospital had invited her to take part in a research project but she declined. She maintains that she does all she can for her family and thus retained her happiness and good health. Regarding her family left behind she told me,

'I have seven children. Three were born in Jamaica from my relationships with different men before I came to England<sup>66</sup>. After I arrived in England I met and married my husband and I had four more children. My two remaining children (one passed away) that were born in Jamaica still live in Jamaica. One of my daughters came here with her family and spent six months with me in 1987. I speak to them on the telephone. I also go to Jamaica to visit them. Although my family live apart, I try to maintain good relations but it is hard.

Maybe it is because my children in Jamaica did not grow with me that caused them to be more distant. I fear going to Jamaica because they look for so much from me...money, money, money is all they want. They could be more loving.'

Useful to my analysis is my recognition of Schneider's comment that kinship is about alliances and reproduction, biological links that constitute bonds, ties, and solidarity that are proportional to the biological closeness of the kin, which have social and cultural attributions (1984:188). However, kin ties in my research differ according to gender. I ask why, do ties relate to relationship closeness as well as the mother/child nurture bond? I answer this later, under

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<sup>66</sup> She indicated that her first child conceived in unfortunate circumstances appeared to be the result of abuse.

the section titled, 'The formation of the marginal male position'. First, I evaluate the closeness of kin regarding their social relations, for as Schneider proposes all social institutions are inextricably interrelated and intertwined, similar to Mauss's 'total social fact' (1984:197).

Consequently, I examine the information within my informants' historical and wider social cultural context. Therefore, I assess the impact of movement (influenced by external factors) and the pursuit of economic growth and security. It is from this perspective, I suggest, the gender differences emerge so I evaluate the kinship patterns before and after migration to Europe. I draw on theory concerning the process of how a kinship structure develops and applied the theoretical process, as an assessment model. This enabled me to consider the wider social influences on my informants' gendered kin ties, under the heading forming kinship networks.

Schneider (1984) also highlights that in Western societies institutions other than the family perform wide-ranging functions that kinship groups performed in 'non-industrialised' societies (Collier and Yanagisako 1987a:3). In my case, there is a strong emphasis on the market economy, state laws and regulations and the social services that I suggest assists in the development of the present kinship structure of my informants because they perform many social and personal functions and meet unmet needs.

### *The formation of the marginal male position*

Investigation of the formation of the marginal male position assists my second line of inquiry in this chapter. I assess my findings concerning how my male informants' estranged from their children and family causing kinship instability and male marginalisation generally. Overall, I found differences in respect of gender and the connections between my elderly informants and their children. However, it appears that the female role has a more defined status within the family, although there are instances where both my male and female informants live apart from children. Since most of my informants' divorced movements from the family home have a major impact on relationships and reciprocity. It is

most common that the male partner would leave the family home or have multiple family homes where their children reside. In addition, men may not reside with any of their children. So what are the implications of this?

Through looking at their social encounters, within the globalisation context concerning their migration it transpires the elderly people journeyed to England to seek better opportunities, stability and prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s and although work and accommodation were eventually obtained they met new issues regarding adaptation and inclusion into English society. The movement into the scheme resulted from the culmination of various reasons for my informants but all moved into the sheltered housing scheme because there was a need for accommodation and support that they did not have and could not afford themselves. So ultimately, both men and women became dependent on the state. My research findings depicted in Figure 15, page 155, show that there were eight main reasons for moving into the scheme that reflect their personal circumstances as elderly people that relates to gender as expressed above. The reasons include relationship breakdown, living in property in disrepair with failing health, the loss of a purchased house, to be nearer to family, moving out of a rented room, on return to England from Jamaica, and being homeless due to family issues. I therefore suggest there is a link between my informants, their children, and their movement concerning housing and present occupancy in single person households. Consequently, gender differences emerge out of unpacking this journey.

I therefore ask, what are the consequences of separations from children? West Indians are not alone in experiencing a high rate in relationship breakdown. Jacobson, Liem and Weiss (2001) highlight the increase in one parent households and that clear boundaries about childcare and the associated costs need to be negotiated between parents, but this is difficult to negotiate and conflicts arise. Consequently, 'most couples defined household, rather than the family, as the proper reference point in making decisions' (Jacobson, Liem and Weiss 2001:237). In reality, I found such joint parenting absent in my research and a clearer split occurred, consequently households became headed solely by my female informants. Due to the male absence, I suggest that the concept

of family itself marginalized for my male informants who often assume a position as outsider. Unless, in minor instances, when left as the head of households. Nevertheless, estrangement resulted as Social Services intervened to take over managing the welfare of the children. Further research might unpack the issues behind this phenomenon.

I uncovered a high degree of estrangement by looking at most of my male informants because the majority were not conscientious at maintaining parental links with their children after they moved from their household. For example Mr. Earles maintains that he was a good father:

'I made sure that my children were alright. I would always give them money and make sure that they did not get left out. I made some money working in the building trade and I use to rent out the houses I bought. So I also had places to hold parties. I loved to enjoy myself and I was always making parties, I loved to sport<sup>67</sup>.'

It is in this context that Mr. Earles relates to his contact and involvement with his children. He ensured they had money and goods from the money he made but he was not as involved with their emotional upbringing. Mr. Earles therefore played an economic role within his family, but it did not bring him in, rather it seems Mr. Earles just put money on the table in multiple households as he pronounced with pride. Nevertheless, the frequency and level of help appropriate to the needs of his children was marginal and on closer examination, respect for him is questionable. Mr. Earles (Appendix A, figure E) continues,

'I have children from different relationships you know. When I was married to my first wife I had four children with other women so my children did not live together. They lived with their mothers so they are not really that close to each other. I have two younger children in Jamaica with my present wife who they do not know. My wife in

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<sup>67</sup> Have a good time socialising.

Jamaica does not know any of my other children either. So I have a lot of little families really not one big one, my family is scattered.'

He is unwilling to openly admit to me this scattering of his family and the lack of knowledge his wives and children have of his separate units is problematic. I can therefore only suggest, that in this scenario, having separated households often resulted in my male informants being excluded from the familial unit, as the logistics of maintaining relations with the ex-partner and children become strained and difficult to organise. Perhaps their intentions to do so were not significant. This reflected in his suggestion that there is a lack of respect towards him from his ex-partner. Mr. Truman (Appendix A, figure Q) offered a more reasoned reflection and told me that he believes that his relationship with his ex-partner affected his relationship with his daughter by commenting,

'I think her mother poisoned her against me. She did not bring her to see me or keep me involved with what was going on. Our relationship ended and she did not want anything to do with me. So I just let it go and did not bother them. I believe now my daughter and I are strangers she does not have respect for me.'

Similarly, Mr. Smith also lamented on his estrangement from his children. Mr. Smith was married but this union was childless, though he did have children out of wedlock through extra-marital affairs with other women. Therefore, he did not reside in a household with any of his children, and was not present much in both their formative and later years. In addition, one of his children, born in England, returned to Jamaica with his mother and grew up there with her without Mr. Smith (Appendix A, figure P). He explained,

'I never live with my children and I cannot influence them now. I feel so bad and embarrassed that one of my sons is in prison for armed robbery. He shot the security at the bank. I know he did not grow with me but I feel it. He does not listen to me because we are not that close.'

Mr. Smith is quite removed from his children whom he does not see but alternatively spends his time with friends. Luckily, he is very well, active, able-bodied and can undertake day-to-day living tasks without help. He is unlike most other male informants his younger age and better health. His current situation results from his hitherto disengaged stance to parenting when his children were younger. I suggest that rather than having a lack of reciprocity, as he ages, he is reaping his lack of involvement by receiving the same from his children.

There are also stark differences when men assumed the position of sole carer, although I acknowledge fewer incidences where men became carers of their children. Two men became sole carers of their children due to the premature death and desertion of their wives. They did their best, unfortunately, they only looked after their children for a few years because they lost their place as parents and guardians when their children taken by Social Services and put into children's homes. Mr. James (Appendix A, figure J) told me how he felt when he lost his children.

'I had a sudden shock when my wife died in 1962 of cancer. We had four children and I was left alone with them. I had a job and I kept working. I never got any help from anyone. I worked hard and long hours so I did the best for my children.

My children would come home from school and the older ones would help to get the dinner prepared so they could all eat. They played with each other alone at home until I came from work. I came in quite late in the evening because I worked far away in north London and I worked long hours in a factory. One day I found out that my son had stolen a bike. I was angry with him and I disciplined him. I told him off and locked him in the cellar. His friend called at the flat to see him and found out he was locked in the cellar. He went away and told his mother, eventually the Social Services authority removed all of my children from me and placed them into children's homes. The children were divided as the girls stayed together in one home and

my son was in another home on the opposite side of London on his own. This broke my heart and I felt flat. I lost everything. I never married again, or lived with anyone nor had any more children.

I tried to keep in contact with them and visited them as much as I could at the weekend when I was not working. I think that is why my relationship is like it is with my children. I have always been independent and I do not rely on anyone. I am self sufficient now. I know I can call upon my two daughters if I need to but I prefer to look out for them. I am very independent. After my children left the children's homes they went to live elsewhere but not with me. Right now one daughter lives in Germany, married to a German man. I am not talking to her because I lent her some money and she has not repaid it back to me as she said she would. I have not spoken to her for two years. I do not like it when they take advantage of me because I will give money to them freely. Another daughter lives in Birmingham and she married an English man. She will phone me and send me some clothes sometimes. The other daughter lives in Brixton to a man whose parents come from Jamaica. She goes there with him to see his family. She comes to see me on Sundays and will bring food for me, but I insist on cooking my own chicken. Her children do not like to come to see me because I am a disciplinarian and they do not like to be disciplined. My son is unmarried and unwell due to his mental health problems, so I rarely see him.'

Mr. James's situation shows how his isolation and lack of larger kin network left him unsupported as sole parent. His children taken away from him because his style of discipline deemed unacceptable left him living alone. This eventually led to lengthy separations and coolness between them. Although contact remains it seems to lack a greater sense of bonding. He appears to be saddened by the loss of children and I gather from him that he has not recovered from this emotional pain and loss of parenting role. This is because he kept telling me he is a kind, caring and gentle man but is misunderstood, however verification was impossible.

To sum up, distance and ambivalence developed in the relationships that become quite estranged and lead to the minimal involvement of children with their fathers in later years. When taken as a group, my informants' families formed rather similar in pattern to those in their formative years in their family of orientation, as depicted in figure 17 below. I make comparisons between the total figures in columns 2 and 3.

1	2	3
Informant	Informant's parents' child-bearing status	Informant's child-bearing status
<b>Male</b>		
Mr. Bailey	Extra-Marital	Married, divorced, partner
Mr. Baker	Partner	Married, Extra-Marital
Mr. Earles	Married	Married, Extra-Marital
Mr. Griffiths	Married	Married x 2, widowed
Mr. Harvey	Extra-Marital	Married, divorced
Mr. James	Partner	Married, widowed
Mr. Melvin	Extra-marital	Married, widowed, divorced
Mr. Truman	Married	Married, divorced
Mr. Smith	Extra-Marital	Married, divorced, Extra-Marital
<b>Female</b>		
Mrs. Baker	Married	Married
Mrs. Baker (a)	Married	Married, divorced
Mrs. Evans	Married	Married, divorced
Mrs. Harris	Married	Partner
Mrs. Mason	Partner	Married, separated
Mrs. Parker	Extra-Marital	Partner, Married, separated
Mrs. Scott	Married	Married, widowed
	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>Married 9</b>	<b>Married 15</b>
	<b>Extra-Marital 5</b>	<b>Extra-Marital 3</b>
	<b>Partner 3</b>	<b>Partner 3</b>
	<b>Pat. Gran 3</b>	<b>Pat. Gran 5</b>
	<b>Mat. Gran 4</b>	<b>Mat. Gran 14</b>
	<b>Both 2</b>	<b>Both 2</b>
		<b>Friends 0</b>
		<b>Divorced/Sep. 9</b>

**Figure 17** *Comparison between family of orientation and family of procreation*



To unravel further, Figure 17 highlights a significant similarity between the statuses my informants' parents held and that my informants held whilst childbearing. Overall, as a group the majority of my informants were married, showing an increase, however, the divorce and separation rate is high. Similar numbers engaged in a non-married partnership relationship. In addition, a similar proportion had extra-marital affairs. In addition, a similarly low number spoke of having joint contact with their children and consequently their grandchildren. The ties held between my male elders, their children and grandchildren rose slightly with my informants but this relatively low number reflected the fact that they had closer contact with their mothers and grandmothers, due to parental separations and the link being maintained through the maternal line. Therefore, there are significantly higher numbers of my elderly informants as grandmothers, engaging with their children and grandchildren. Perhaps this is due to long term permanent residency in England, in the main, with most of their children nearby.

So, the familial patterns continue with the extra-marital affairs and births outside of wedlock or partnership unions, personal tragedies and the scenario of multiple partners and households in which men did not build up strong unions or relationships that created an absent father kin pattern. Consequently, the elderly men are prone to aloneness, and are more isolated thereby reliant on distanced familial relationships or friends rather than supportive close family ties with their children. Therefore, influences other than kin association and support are determinants of placement and belonging.

### *Understanding the gender differences*

This leads me to address my third line of enquiry regarding the above differences through the examination of how my male informants became marginal that resulted in matrifocality. In order to assess this situation I explored the cultural construction of gender within Caribbean kinship, through looking at familial relations. Anderson-Levy (2001) influenced my summations. Her perceptions that with the exception of R.T Smith and Lisa Douglas no other anthropological study has paid significant attention to the ways that class and

race intersect and operate in the family system prove important avenues to explore. Also Anderson-Levy further suggested that only Douglas had recognised and utilised gender as an analytic category in conjunction with race and class (2001:189), indeed when gender was considered the focus was placed on men to the detriment of gender in broader terms (Anderson-Levy 2001:191). In addition Wiltshire-Brodber's finding that Caribbean identities are further affected by race and class and bell hooks suggestion that, '... race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, [and] social status ... which are rarely transcended' (cited in Anderson 2001:190), provided the elements that contributed to her understanding of the complexities and conflicting identities of womanhood (Anderson-Levy 2001:186).

I found important, Anderson-Levy's suggestion that Jamaicans have internalised racism from the past and this affects the way kin networks are constructed (2001:187). She therefore advocated that the identities as a woman and wife create a paradoxical construction of gender roles that produce conflicting identities in the lives of women in Jamaica (2001:185). She explained that women look after their children and serve their male partner, therefore their identity as wife and mother collided together (2001:185). However her various roles are contained within her identity and when they meet through the simultaneous operation of her activities, as mother and wife, they smash into each other and collude, obscuring the forces that construct them (2001:186). Anderson-Levy proposed this dynamic highlighted the conflicting multifaceted female role that, I suggest, is applicable to Jamaican women as well as other women and to my respondents.

Useful to providing an understanding of this situation is Olwig's (1981) earlier questioning of matrifocality. Olwig asserted that women gained equality and independence within slavery, however after emancipation their independence and role in the family was supported by a network of exchange structures, family and friends thus enabling a matrifocal tendency (Olwig 1981:160), for women were not independently powerful. Indeed my female informants were both dependent and independent as wives and single mothers, assisted at times by husbands, child-minding help and the state. Anderson-Levy also

proposed that colonialism socially constructed gendered norms and behaviours as feminine and masculine. These, she suggested, depict third world men as lazy and effeminate and women as strong and un-sexual or alternatively as highly sexual. Anderson-Levy stated that although this view victimised women, both genders manoeuvred within the family structure to get what they want. Thus, women creatively ensured their own economic survival and that of their children. Indeed, Anderson-Levy highlights that lower-class childbirth was associated with social adulthood for the women, whereas for men, having several relationships marked virility and manhood but because males faced job insecurity, they had lessened economic involvement with their families. Further, men feared female economic dominance so stayed at a distance. Lower-class women therefore developed an allegiance to their children rather than to their partner. In opposition, among middle-class women their allegiance is first to their husband and then to their children so marriage is binding, signifying independence and adulthood to both who reside in the household held together by marriage and economic security (Anderson-Levy 2001:198).

It is apparent that my informants developed unions and parenting patterns within this working-class context. I found that many of my female informants stayed in relationships for the sake of their children for as long as they could and after the relationship ended they continued as single parents. Mrs. Harris (Appendix A, Figure H) remarked on her relationships and sole parenting saying,

'I was never lucky with men. I was married in Jamaica before I came to England but my husband was a terrible man. He used to see other women and he was not nice to me. I met him in Kingston when I went there to live from the country. We lived together for a couple of years and he helped a little financially but when the relationship ended we parted and went our different ways.

When I came to England I met other men and had relationships and had other children but I never married them nor did they live with me. I focused on my children and I brought up my children by myself. I

made sure that they had what they needed. We did not have much money and we moved a lot because our accommodation was mostly horrible. My kids and I have a very good relationship though because I did my best to bring them up in a good home. I know they appreciate what I did for them because I did my best. None of my children here ever had any help from their father.'

Another of my informants experienced a traumatic marriage but stayed with her husband. Although her husband provided for the household his character affected his relationship with his children, bringing in an element of disrespect for him, allowing her to occupy a better position than him. Mrs. Elgin (no chart) explained,

'My husband was a very stubborn and wicked man. He used to hit me. I suffered this throughout our marriage but I stayed with him for the sake of the children. We bought a house and that is where I lived, I did not have anywhere else to go. I left him eventually but I was already old. I use to go to the elderly luncheon club and they could see that I was depressed and unhappy. He never stopped hitting me and I could not take it any more so they helped me to move out into this scheme.

Funnily enough I am now the only one who looks after him. I am blessed with good enough health to move around. He is suffering now because he lives alone with no one to look after him in the big house. So I go round to see him and make sure he is alright. I cook his dinner and take it to him every day. Now my children are glad that I have moved away from him and that I live in peace, and I am glad they help me '.

Mrs. Jarvis (no chart) had a similar abusive marital experience and says that when her husband died,

'It was a relief for me. He used to abuse me. My children wanted me to leave him but I could not. After he died I stayed a while in the flat but moved in here because I was living alone and needed more help and a better place to live in.'

Mrs. Mason (Appendix A, Figure K) echoed similar difficulties with her husband that some of my other female informants also experienced. She told me,

'When I was married, living with my husband, things were bad for a long time between us. We were not getting along well together. But we had the children and bought a house to live in together. It was the first place I could call home. I wanted to look after my children and not let them experience the bad things that happened to me. We started to move apart more and had separate bedrooms in the house. Looking back now I can see I tried so hard to carry on because I did not have anywhere else to go and everything I had was in the house.'

Indeed, some of my male informants did not re-engage with establishing relationships with women after experiencing the loss of their partner preferring to stay alone, preferring freedom. Perhaps this is what Mr. James (Appendix A, Figure J) was suggesting when he said, 'I prefer to stay on my own, I do not need a woman. I can do everything in the house myself, I can cook, wash, sew and look after myself'. Whereas, it appeared that my female informants may have desired financial help, emotional bonding and mutual support, but not obtaining this they focused mostly on looking after their children.

Interestingly, some of my male informants expressed mistrust of women. For example, Mr. Griffiths (Appendix A, figure G) was married and widowed, he has had multiple relationships since, but his reflection on relationships highlights mistrust between the genders as a result of the complicated relationships. He says,

'I am scared of women. Some of them just want to use you. They let me spend my money on them though. I live alone but I don't like it. I want a bit of company, you know. But I have to be very careful. I cannot trust just any woman because some of them just want money from me. I had a woman like that before. All she wanted from me was money. She lived with me and when she moved out she took all the furniture.'

Mr. Earles (Appendix A, Figure E) expresses his ambivalence of women as he told me,

'... it is hard to trust women, but I love woman. I cannot do without them so I just try my luck and if it doesn't work out I just pick up the pieces and carry on with my life'.

Herein lay an interesting link to understanding the unions and the identity adopted by each gender. For it appeared that the identities formed contain oppositional forces between partners, based on mutual mistrust, keeping them apart rather than bringing them together. If this is the link, then I suggest that the unions themselves are thinly drawn together and the bonding is slight, being economical rather than mutually emotionally supportive. The men accept their marginal position within the household and estranged relationship that ensued with their children, spouse and or partner. As elderly men, they are ambivalent about relationships but intend to still enter them continuing their economic input to a younger woman's life for companionship, but this perhaps involves more of a sexual return. It is through this scenario that I suggest the main familial connection patterns remain influenced by the configuration established under the influence of colonialism, that according to Anderson-Levy, constructed womanhood (2001:194).

Indeed, Anderson-Levy stated that there is mistrust between the sexes and it is expected that a man will be unfaithful and it is not uncommon for a wealthy middle-class man to have two separate families marrying one of his own class and colour and being with another of a lower class with illegitimate children.

This dual family situation was also prevalent among lower-class men who did the same thing but they could not afford to take care of their families so moved from woman to woman, sometimes keeping them simultaneously, thereby affecting kinship patterns. This resulted in what Harrison describes as consanguineal relations amongst the lower-class where female centred networks developed mother-child inter-generational bonds, whereas in middle-class nuclear families affinal or husband-wife relations dominated (cited in Anderson-Levy 2001: 194).

The findings in my research highlight a stronger bond that endures through the life course between the mother and her children than her male counterpart. This created loss and ambivalence between fathers and their children, and I suggest questionable respect. In addition, the pattern of extra-marital procreation also had detrimental effects on the elderly man who mostly experienced estranged or very strained distant and complex relationships. However, on further analysis, my agreement with Anderson-Levy is partial because I uncovered a more complex situation since my female informants also experienced separation from some of their children due to migration where they left them behind, as Mrs. Harris (Appendix A, Figure H) states,

'I send money home as often as I could to my aunt and uncle in Jamaica to look after my daughters. So they know I did not leave them out, or abandon them. So when they grew up they had a good relationship with me.'

Nevertheless, perhaps the connection Mrs. Harris described is the ability for females to bond together because they share similar life experiences and women relate to each other and seek advice from each other as a source of support, even from afar. Moreover, a paradox concerning my female informants, for while my female informants retained more of an economic focus by continuing to economically support their children, the economic aid is one sided. Therefore their needs as elderly women may not be met by children overseas because they do not return the economic help but believe their mothers as better off than them because they live in England and receive help

from the state, as Mrs. Parker (Appendix A, Figure M) indicated. My female informants also had children with whom they resided and enjoyed reciprocal bonds with, so maintained more kin ties than my male informants. For my male informants, having children often resulted in a situation, where instead of creating wider kin networks from children, their network dwindled down to very little.

### *Movement, kinship and gendered roles*

In order to understand the development of my informants' socially constructed familial kinship patterns marked by gender differentiations I explored a process of kinship development. I undertook this in order to provide a frame of reference to unpack and understand that of my informants in light of the findings above. Betrell (2001) asserted that kinship has many analytical threads, and based on symbols rather than a set of rules providing explanatory or analytical models. From Fortes through Evan-Pritchard, R.T. Smith, Campbell, Sahlins, Barnes, Keesing, Strathern, among others, there was much debate surrounding units of analysis and the definition of kinship particularly in the modern cross-cultural context (cited in Betrell 2001:50). Concepts include the social analysis of real beings influenced by Geertz, so actions and networks of actions utilised by Witherspoon are used to deal with the issues of continuity, change, stability and flexibility in social life (cited in Betrell 2001). For 'once male and female roles are given equal analytical focus, the multidimensional meanings of kinship, family and descent are revealed' (Betrell 2001:59). Indeed, I revealed differing gender ties and roles. Besson (2002) also showed that matrifocality reflected the different situations women found themselves in regarding relationships with men rather than being a major feature of the marriage system. These relationships are depicted by the scenarios such as residing in a 'household headed by a woman in an extraresidential marriage, or being in an interstitial status between marriages, or as a consequence of widowhood' (Besson 2002:297). These multidimensional statuses were the positions that my informants too found themselves in at different stages in their lives.



I sought the driving forces that would help to link the gender pattern I found thematically. De Boeck's (1998) analytic framework assisted, where gender and social relations intertwined to structure kinship<sup>68</sup>. For an awareness of a theoretical construct of kinship focused on gendered relatedness provided an understanding about the emergence of the gender differences that I uncovered. De Boeck (1989) provided a useful symbolic construction model that links the important connection between social organisation, kinship, personhood and identity (Betrell 2001:58). For, as Carsten suggested, 'kinship is a process of becoming so as a term it can be used to characterise the relatedness that people act and feel' (Betrell 2001:59). Therefore, in terms of my male and female informants' gendered roles within kinship I found my male informants placed on the margins, a position accepted by both genders. In chapter 2, I presented theories that suggested that the West Indian working-class family culture had a strong emphasis on the female as a key figure, as the more prominent parent with males playing a specific role but not necessarily being part of the household. In chapter 4, my research findings suggested that when the elderly people were young they tended to live with the most economically able caretakers if they were not living with their mothers, this could be both led by either their paternal or maternal side of their family, headed by a mother and

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<sup>68</sup> De Boeck(1998) found that the ageing process and rootedness were entwined in the aLuunda's cosmological symbolic traditional culture where the body and the landscape are intertwined. The life cycles therefore evolve in tandem with cycles of the moon, sun and the seasonal alterations. It is the responsibility of the male elder to appropriate wisdom therefore this role defined his place and power in society. His role holds a controlling centralised responsibility to strengthen ties of solidarity and support within the society and to perpetuate a sense of deep-rooted belonging. The male therefore develops gerontocratic authority and forms an increasing interconnectedness with others who develop through him. As he grows older acquires more wives, children and new relationships that expand through children's matrimonial alliances. In addition, he gains more power through his ritual skills. His individuation and self-appropriation derive from his social abilities. He is the central tree-like person (referring to the myoomb tree planted and transmitted by the maternal uncle), still at the centre holding everything together. Therefore, the analogy of the male with the base of trees enables the perpetuation of the ideal cultural order arranged from an immobile centre. Consequently, as he ages he becomes increasingly associated with ancestral wisdom. Old men are thus compared to trees, they say the shrivelled man is 'like a tree which loses its sap and dies' (De Boeck 1998: 42) as this stage completes his life cycle. The royal village is therefore a 'central knot' (De Boeck 1998:43) that politically weaves relations between the villages that are interconnected through networks or pathways likened to trees. This process gives the society a masculine power.

The female position prescribed within the structure determines female roles. A similar web of interconnectedness honours the complementary matrilineal source of life. The female body is metaphorically intertwined with the physical space of home. Yet, the King controls the land where the home is situated.

father figure. In addition, there were absent fathers and extra-marital associations across households. However, on closer analysis of my informants' relatedness to their children a pattern of matrifocal ties emerged more clearly through this chapter.

I found that it difficult to identify a prescribed rooting mechanism, power or inclusive evolutionary path operating for most men in the kinship structure that I studied, although the male and female roles were equal in the institution of family land, as highlighted in chapter 2. I acknowledge that R. T. Smith recently remarked on Caribbean kinship, stating that 'in the Caribbean ..... exploitative gender relations and status-linked forms of conjugal union place women in the workforce away from supportive kin, but their male partners have been supportive of them' (2001:60). This strengthened my argument that my informants and other family members migrated and their movements for work resulted in separations, for both genders, although some men provided some support. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a lack of clear gender differentiation in prescribing leadership, connectivity, familial orientation and rootedness, although recently in England Reynolds (2005) found some men central and powerful in their families.

However, I recognise that the concept of family land in the West Indies serves as a cultural and symbolic site and signifies a place of familial belonging Olwig (2001). Additionally, I suggest because the kinship structure formed with the national and international dispersal of family members, it is influenced by external factors so power is not solely derived from within it. Consequently, I suggest that continual movements of kin prohibit an overarching belief system to form, sustaining and shaping the kinship structure. Instead, at best, I suggest that my West Indian male informants appear to have developed an entrenched ambiguous status based on uncertainty, disempowerment, movement, distance and separations that provide destabilising mechanisms between gender relations and this predisposes the female to be powerful in the family. I therefore agree with Greenfield's (cited in Barrow 1996) structural-functionalist stance, focusing on the domestic labour division, stating that matrifocality is 'a matter of default in which women, in desperation, somehow do what their men

are unable to do' (1996:74). This female practicality, further compounded by wider social processes confirms both male and female relationships.

On deeper assessment of my female informants, it is clear they are also subject to the same environmental and economic forces that shape their development and familial pattern in the diaspora. Yet, they become more influential and powerful in their families than men occupy. Due to difficult or non-enduring relationships they also acquired a multifaceted role because they too worked and maintained a household. Thus, women assumed functions of both breadwinner and carer, undertaking some functions that their male partner would engage in. I suggest this produces an internalised collision and collusion for my female informants similar to Anderson-Levy's (2001) clash.

### *Conclusion*

I suggest that a pattern of gender connections to kin emerges from the summations in chapter 4 and this chapter. Chapter 4 contained information about the familial patterns my elderly informants experienced in their formative family. This chapter contains information about the experiences that my elderly informants had with their children ascertaining the familial structure that contains it. After evaluating the themes from chapters 4 and 5 I found a distinct pattern between the generations. I found that parent and child often separated by movement away from each other and by migration. In addition, I found the males are more absent in family relations than females, as an additional result of relationship breakdown and mistrust between the genders.

This chapter therefore highlights the inter-generational pattern of kin ties, where through separated households an emotional distance between parent and child results. The frequent removal of the male through his movement re-cycles the experience of omission and perpetuates the trends in which dislocation and disassociation cannot provide a structure for the male to be a bearer of a descent focus. This is because black men are generally marginal to power in society, and in this case, also to the ordering of the household and family relations. As a consequence of the severed relationships my male informants

meander from one relationship to another gaining losses rather than power, fostering more individualisation and separation rather than inclusion in their family. This situation is in contrast to most of my female informants, who in the main retain a closer attachment to their children.

The act of migration and movement become very important components in the assessment of kinship, rootedness, and male and female differences. This is because with dispersal and migration, placement and roots, though important, remain problematic amid the continual fight for survival. As fewer people returned to the initial roots in the West Indies, the strength of family attachment cannot develop into a strong long lasting bond because the reality of dispersal overtakes it and influences the form of family ties. Thus creating the culture of movement, that I suggest, affects kinship belonging, for belonging is continually affected and adapts through the movements. The men in my research mostly marginalized, find familial dispersal further compounded the issues in conjunction with relationship breakdown or extra-marital affairs that caused the loss or weakness of ties with children. Alternatively, I discovered my female informants more tied to their children who lived with them from birth into adulthood, than those born and left in the West Indies. However, in adulthood their children may too leave forming nuclear units. Therefore, both my male and female informants can become individualised and separate from kin although links remained more between the elderly women and their children. Moreover, residency of over forty years enabled my female informants to secure stronger ties with their children born in England who lived with them during their formative years remaining in their locality in adulthood. Therefore, movement created both kinship insecurity or instability and the emerging matrifocal stability in England. This process leads to what I call 'a matrifocal tendency through practicality' and describes their pattern of familial relations and gender differences.

Consequently, this makes men more reliant on the state and external sources localising their sense of belonging. A reliance on the state also applies to the women but additionally they achieve their sense of belonging through local connections to their children and grandchildren and their wider kinship network.

## Chapter 6

### **Petty Rivalries: 'Small Garden, Bitter Weed'**

#### *Introduction*

I found Mr. Johns, one of the residents who formerly said that he did not want to take part in the research, in a chatty mood so I asked him if he got on with the other residents. He looked at me quizzically and stated, "in here is like, small garden, bitter weed ...". I asked him what he meant by these particular words and he explained that the scheme was a small place and contained many elements that were distasteful, due to the problematic differences between the elderly people. He asked me, 'haven't you noticed' indicating that I should acknowledge the differences, and the difficulties they create, I recognised them discovering interesting issues explored in this chapter.

This chapter therefore continues the focus on difference. Chapter 3 highlighted the various views my informants held about growing old that permeated their precarious position in society as black elders, as well as the differences among them as a group. In chapter 5, I uncovered the impact of gender differentiation affecting association with their families suggesting that kinship ties have not solely continued to provide a strong basis for belonging, particularly for my male informants. Given that my informants are associated with state services, I wanted to find out whether the state brought them together and facilitated belonging within their local community? I therefore utilise the concepts from Gramsci (1990) and Bhabha (1994) to investigate how their agency is asserted and to bring out how they negotiate their belonging together, to the group in the scheme and in the local community.

The aim of the scheme is to create belonging through enabling social relations to develop (Lovell 1998), so that the elder residents can form a community at the scheme. It is intended my informants' socialisation will link their internal and external associations and enable belonging to the local area where the

scheme is situated. This chapter uncovers the reality behind this intention. The claim to community building at first appeared to me to be an ambitious aim by the state authorities and I was intrigued to ascertain the mechanisms used as the vehicles to facilitate this development. I therefore investigate the avenues through which my elderly informants interweave their activities both inside the scheme and in the local vicinity in which the scheme is located. In order to appreciate the differences suggested by the title of this chapter, I look at the way different factions manifest among them through their socialisation. Interesting themes arise from their social patterns and the exclusions found embedded in their group affiliations. I found their positioning also influenced by their personal moral and social judgement of each other, whilst their personal agency shows how their self-efficacy was in conflict with their group alliance.

I am concerned with the mechanisms used to develop the communal activities that involve my elderly informants sharing each others' company, watching films and conversing, attending the New Year Party and coffee mornings as well as partaking in funeral activities and playing dominoes together. The state provided some of the activities they engaged in, others evolved from their cultural and social activities. I therefore highlight how both worked together, identifying antagonisms.

### *Locality*

Their position regarding being part of the local community is problematic. Fardon (cited in Lovell 1998:4) warned anthropologists against seeing localities as isolated hinterlands bearing no connection to the wider world. Indeed localities are influenced by global connections (Appadurai 1996:18), therefore Appadurai's suggestion that, 'cultural reproduction ... becomes political and exposed to the traumas of deterritorialisation as family members negotiate ... in sometimes fractured spatial arrangements ... in a disjunctive global world' (1996:44) proves poignant. However, a question arose asking, how my informants' West Indian culture affected and merged with local culture? Similarly Olwig and Hastrup question the concept of being 'local' or in a

'location' asserting that culture is not tied to a particular place but is created daily through interaction with people for cultural practices move with the migrant (cited in Lovell 1998:5).

Therefore, my informants' cultural practices comprise of elements from their West Indian heritage and the influences from their residency in England through which their differences emerge. So, as suggested by Bhabha (cited in Lovell 1998:5), their identity becomes located because of their movement and difference to the host nation, so they create a new space of negotiation, termed the 'third space', between places rather than bound to particular homelands. In this respect, my informants' engagement with their locality is also a multi-vocal, multi-faceted and a multi-layered process, where they negotiate their place, affected by their social, racial and cultural difference. This negotiation influenced by a strong attachment to their homeland, albeit a romanticised focus remained. Nevertheless, they held a distinct West Indian/Jamaican culture expressed in their personal and social localised worlds.

### *Differences*

As residents at the scheme differences surfaced among my informants and between them and the host nation, brought together by the interwoven policies that govern the service provision. These elements conjoined with their social interactions. This combining is evident in the ordering of their environment that attempts to harmonise their different social affiliations. A description of their communal space from my field notes highlights the attempts at cultural synchronisation, or creolisation.

The field notes state that in the sheltered housing scheme the interplay of culture is observable. The traditional furnishings are of a high standard and the décor in the scheme is very modern. Together the furnishings and décor provide a mixture of classical British and modern styles creating the atmosphere of a well furnished and maintained home. In the lounge and public places vibrancy is generated by the strong colours and cultural artwork placed

on the wall depicting West Indian images. The walls in the communal lounges painted rose in one and a strong yellow in the other are bright, the communal kitchen a bold blue. The hallways on the different levels are a mixture of lime green, bright green and yellow shades. The mood generated from the colours is warm and strong, perhaps to lift the spirits of elderly people failing in health and strength. In addition, the bright outlook is cheerful and is reminiscent of the sunshine found in the West Indian terrain (see Figures 18, 19 and 20). The mix of British traditional furniture and West Indian colourful brightness personifies the mix found among my elderly inhabitants that also contains the discord and disharmonious elements.



**Figure 18**

*The communal lounge at the scheme*





**Figure 19** A picture hanging on the wall in the lounge at the scheme

majority of the residents had lived there for many years, some since the 1950s and some since the 1960s. I also found that the residents were also familiar with each other. Nevertheless, I still observed the underlying tensions among my elderly informants. A comment from Mrs. Evans, a Christian, who remarked about a fellow resident, Mr. Jones, 'I don't have anything to do with him, he is an alcoholic, I keep out of his way', express the divisions and separateness between them.

The divisions found typical of those explained by Wilson (1973), who undertook research on the very Caribbean island of Providencia, focusing specifically on



**Figure 20**      *A view of the hallway at the scheme*

Commenting on their bonds, Mrs. Johns remarked, 'I keep me little self to myself ... I live here a long time now so I know how to get along with them.' Mrs. Scott was not alone in her long-term residency at the scheme because the majority of the residents had lived there for many years, some since the scheme opened in 1986. It had become very familiar to them and they were also familiar with each other. Nevertheless, I soon observed the underlying tensions among my elderly informants. A comment from Mrs. Evans, a Christian, who remarked about a fellow resident, Mr. Johns, 'I don't have anything to do with him, he is an alcoholic, I keep out of his way', express the divisions and separateness between them.

The divisions found typical of those explained by Wilson (1973), who undertook research on the tiny Caribbean island of Providencia, focusing specifically on community organisation. He asserted that a system concerning respectability

and reputation provided the structure for organising and operating social values. For Wilson (1973) respectability represents the white European institutions and colonial values that are based on social worth and class ideal regarding power and prestige, marriage and the nuclear family, moral behaviours and God-fearing attitudes, such as association with the church. Wilson found that women were more concerned with respectability and men with reputation. So across gender there were different and overlapping value systems and behaviours where respectability was obtained from the mother and the household that she kept.

Alternatively, reputation cannot be inherited it is earned by trade, smuggling and other acts (1973:151). Reputation is earned by individual success, judged by one's peer group it includes actions that are illegal and anti-social (1973:xi). It is rooted in the symbolism developed by the freed slaves after emancipation in their relationship between land ownership and kinship, based on the premise of equality. Reputation is therefore associated with anti-establishment attitudes and actions. Central to reputation is the ability for men to prove their virility by having children, fighting and undertaking physical feats that show fearless masculinity as well as frequenting rum shops. However, older men veered towards seeking respectability.

The terms respectability and reputation are 'counterposed and interlocked principles of social behaviour' that are regularly pitted against each other between whole groups and in the minds of individuals (Wilson 1973:xi). Boundaries create inclusions and exclusions (Wilson 1973:98) where gender, age differences, and class determine the operation of the two systems. Therefore, reputation and respect are in conflict with each other as they represent different lifestyles and systems. 'Crab antics' or actions serving to put others down in order to self elevate, give emphasis to the conflicts.

'Wilson's work identifies a creole counterculture to colonialism, rooted especially in land' (Besson 2002:14), however Besson suggests there are weaknesses in this theory regarding Afro-Caribbean peasant women (2002:14).

For Wilson's notions of reputation and respect are based on 'unequal and exploitative gender relations' and 'he mistakenly assumes that opposition to colonial culture is the preserve of Afro-Caribbean men and that black Caribbean women are perpetuators of Eurcentric values'. In addition, 'Wilson's conclusion that reputation is primarily male-orientated overlooks the fact that women, too, compete for status, both among themselves and with men' (Besson 2002:14-15). Therefore Besson (2002) suggests that Wilson's notions are insufficient because he based his assumptions on the Providencia community solely copying European values. Besson also points out, Roland Littlewood's proposal that 'women are respectable ... relative to men' (2002:15). Nevertheless, there are other challenges highlighted by Besson (2005:15), such as Brana-Shute (1993), McKay (1993), Bush (1990), Olwig (1993), Trouillot (1992), Miller (1994), Yelvington (1993, 1995, 1996, 1998), Young (1993), Kossek (1995) and Sutton (1974). Besson also cites Mimi Sheller (1998), noting that 'black women challenged "white male control of religion", especially through Revival leadership as "Mothers" and "Queens"' and were involved in political actions (2002:15-16). In addition, Barrow (1998) suggests Wilson's gendered notion of respect and reputation are questionable, for men apply a balance to their lives, rather than behaving within this strict dichotomy assessment of their social relations.

Nonetheless, I find Wilson's (1973) concepts of reputation and respect useful to assess my data. I discover the aforementioned gender demarcation generally mirrored. Women were involved with church activities and men with other social pursuits such as drinking, frequenting bars and cafes, and predominantly played dominoes, as depicted in Figure 21. However, I agree with the above criticism because I found women were powerful leaders in the church and were active in youth groups and women's groups in the church helping the congregation. In doing so, they were (small 'p') politically active trying to affect changes between the genders in social relations by helping to empower other women as well as young people.

However, from my view of Wilson's interpretation, and assessment of my elderly informants, what unfolds is a conflicting cultural practice described by the 'crab antics' term because a person cannot solely be in one group because elements of reputation and respect are often embedded in the person. For example, the individual desire for conformity exists and the need to push boundaries to express oneself. I therefore suggest, what develops is a complex interwoven web of difference and indifference, creating a conflicting basis for social relations based on their likes, dislikes and petty rivalries. In opposition to Wilson, I found that due to belonging to the same class, divisions are internal in relation to class but further complicated by the aspiration to differentiation due to the religious and moral influences, where I find alignment with Wilson. I therefore suggest that this ensemble, encompassing the notions of respect and reputation, fuels their sense of belonging.

Mr. Johns describes this situation as he further explained to me what he meant by the phrase, 'small garden, bitter weed', saying,

'You have the church people, the family people and the fun people. I love to drink, go to parties and have fun. Some people think I am a bad man because I do these things. I keep myself apart from them because they are not like me. Remember though, you have to mind the church people too because they are hypocrites, and the love they suppose to show us is not there. They rather criticise. So we have a lot of separation in here.'

This friction and difference is at play between them. However, through migration and cultural adaptation scenarios are played out within this urban context where new markers are also used to differentiate them and became interwoven into their social activities.

In the grid below, Figure 21, are the different types of social activities that my informants engaged with both within the scheme and in the local community, identifying activities in relation to reputation and respect. It shows half engaged

in structured respected activity at the scheme and at Day Centres, being predominantly women. Interestingly, a couple of men frequent local bars and hang out on the street, an activity associated with reputation. Both genders (one male and one female informant) worked, this being a respected activity. Many informants were Christians so there was quite a lot of church activity that is associated with respect. Approximately half of my informants attended church, mostly women as only two men said they were Christians and only one man attended church. Playing dominoes provided lively socialisation, an activity often associated with a reputation of ill repute, but as long as the games were conducted cordially, it sat in mid-ground between reputation and respect, especially as some players attended church and were seen as respectful. Here, both men and women were involved, although predominantly men. This highlights how the different pathways overlap and provide avenues through which the entrenched divisions adapt.

<b>Respondent Activity designation</b>	<b>Day Centre</b>	<b>Church</b>	<b>Dominoes</b>	<b>Public space</b>	<b>Café (bar)</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Coffee morning</b>
	Respect	Respect	Reputation	Reputation	Reputation	Res- pect	Respect
Mr. Bailey							*
Mr. Baker			*			*	*
Mrs. Baker(a)		*					*
Mrs. Baker(b)		*					
Mrs. Beaver	*	*					
Mrs. Chambers	*	*					*
Ms. Duncan		*					
Mrs. Eaton							*
Mrs. Elgin		*					*
Mr. Earles							*
Mrs. Evans		*					
Mr. Griffiths	*						*
Mrs. Harris			*				*
Mr. Harvey							*
Mr. James					*		
Mrs. Jarvis	*	*					
Mrs. Johns		*					*
Mrs. Mason		*				*	*
Mr. Melvin							
Mr. Mitchell							*
Mrs. Parker		*					*
Mr. Taylor	*	*	*				
Mr. Truman			*				
Mrs. Scott	*	*					*
Mr. Smith				*			
Mr. White			*				

**Figure 21** *Social activity*

*Belonging together or a divided community?*

There were times when my informants socialised with each other, friendships developed and they went shopping together. They often watched television in small groups particularly enjoying the news, western movies and African comedy videos that the cleaner, from Sierra Leone, shared with them. Various conversations would take place concerning different recipes, here involving the cleaner, who shared African cooking methods that highlighted both their cultural similarity and variation. My informants would also communicate with each about what they were going to do for the day, discuss topical news issues, such as the war in Iraq, particularly denouncing George Bush and Tony Blair or tell jokes and laugh together. Occasionally they may discuss a problem, usually

relating to a communal aspect of the scheme or just sit in silence together. Mrs. Parker often made drinks or a cake and would share some refreshments, such as vegetable juices, with her neighbours and friends. A few of them come together to play dominoes and many would attend the coffee morning at the scheme or Day Centres run by state services. Through activities they engage together inside the scheme and with others in the local area, inviting non-residents into the scheme.

Looking at Bhabha's (1994) positioning regarding the migrant and Gramsci's (1990) notion of social change, regarding the oppressed, I found that although the culture of my informants and the mainstream British culture are different, there were points of merger and conflict as suggested by Said (1993). For Said also recognised that migrants move between the home country and the one they migrate to thereby become involved in a crisis of cultural identity. I found that my informants too belong loyally, often uncritically, to their formative nations while denigrating or fighting against others (Said 1993:xiv). Therefore, their experiences become a sort of theatre with various political and ideological causes engaging with one another whilst they pass through a crisis of cultural identity as they contend to find their allegiance (Said 1993). Indeed, they add to the culture they enter and it assumes some of the culture they bring (Said 1993:15).

There are two main events, facilitated by the Scheme Managers as part of the policy at the scheme to bring residents together as a community. They are the Christmas Party and the coffee mornings. The Christmas Party is an informal gathering of the residents and their family members where they share a Christmas dinner together. Coffee mornings are weekly meetings where the residents are encouraged to socialise and spend time together. The meetings are also used to provide a space for consultation on the services received. It provides an opportunity for them to invite outside speakers to pass on information to them in a social setting. For example, health workers may attend and give advice on matters such as how to maintain good health. However, this rarely occurred because a consensus to regularly assume this formality did not



exist for most did not want it to be a formal affair. This gave rise to differences and fuelled separations among the group of residents.

I joined them for their Christmas dinner, where they were entertained by their resident disc jockey, Mr. Bailey. The food purchased by the staff, prepared by residents, and paid for by the Trust, was a truly communal affair. Those who did not normally join social events attended, making a special effort, being those who attended cafés and spent their days drinking. So the Christmas dinner assisted the communal spirit. The small tables in the lounge were drawn together and covered with festive tablecloths. Overall, most residents attended, some with their daughters some alone. The meal consisted of West Indian foodstuffs and included traditional British roast potatoes. This event was jovial but orderly. However, evidence of the factions emerged when those who played dominoes congregated together around a table and began playing as others drifted away. I heard Mrs. Parker remark, 'I'm going now, I will leave the evening to the dominoes group. They will be there all night'. The ritual of dominoes playing assumed its place as others quietly drifted away, knowing theirs. This is similar to Said's (1993) assertion that the host nation and incoming cultures influence each other and this event reflects this merger, reflected in the dinner containing a mixture of cultural foodstuffs, and the inclusion of traditional West Indian entertainment such as dominoes, within the formal British framework that contains it.

The coffee morning, another communal activity, brings forth multi-faceted issues between my elderly informants. The coffee morning is a regular feature of all sheltered housing provision. It is expected that the residents will engage as part of their socialisation activity provided at the scheme to promote the community building and mitigate isolation and loneliness. However, I uncovered non-engagement with the usual connotation of a coffee morning and re-invention the concept to reflect their needs that emanate from their Caribbean culture, by bringing in a religious blessing on the event, adding their ritual of Caribbean food preparation and sharing, and recreating the meeting time and frame of reference associated with the event. This collective personal agency of

the elders and staff in co-operation pushes away state boundaries as they create their own meeting and work with their differences within the structure at the scheme.

I liken their position to that expressed by Bhabha (1994). Underpinning the notion of the in-between space, Bhabha incorporates the idea of doubling, or being in two places at the same time, a process my informants move through. For to be different from those that are different makes you the same, but the disturbing difference in-between harbours consciousness in the form of otherness that contains notions of displacement (Bhabha 1994:44-45). Looking at this from the migrant minority perspective, the difference between the migrant's culture and the host nation creates opportunity for on-going negotiation as part of the migrant's ensuing historical transformation. Therefore a transformation process occurs resulting from the migrant's cultural displacement and social discrimination that set the grounds for their 'agency of empowerment' (Bhabha 1994:8), or their hegemonic influence in society. This in-between is therefore a 'third space' of representation and the subaltern agency that my informants, and others on their behalf, undertake, allows them to both create and occupy their place. Here, I call upon Gramsci's (1990) recognition that individuals are powerful in creating a self-definition that affects changes in society and provides a useful theoretical concept to process my informants' social actions in their daily life.

The following is a description of a coffee morning that highlights their bonding and divisions. It starts with the opening address usually performed by a church goer or the Scheme Manager, 'Dear heavenly father, we thank you for keeping us so that we can meet once again this morning ...' For this event is orderly and seen as a respectable gathering. The aroma of food fills the surrounding space. As usual resident D.J.<sup>69</sup>, Mr. Bailey, plays background soul and reggae music.

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<sup>69</sup> D.J. refers to disc jockey.

In their format of the traditional coffee morning tea is available but there is an absence of cakes or biscuits and games such as bingo. The Scheme Manager told me,

'My residents do not fit into the traditional coffee morning. They do not want to play bingo for a pound or two or a bag of sugar. Those who want to gamble go outside to do so. They go to real bingo because they want to win real money.'

On this occasion, a Scheme Manager visiting from a mainstream<sup>70</sup> sheltered housing scheme joined in with the coffee morning festivities. She remarked, 'the food is gorgeous but we do not have anything like this to eat, we have tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits', with disappointment emanating from her voice. She commented as she ate food taken from the display that consisted of familiar West Indian dishes such as curry chicken, ackee and salt fish, fried dumplings, fried plantain, curry goat, hard dough bread and sweet bread plus other variations. (This variety is not always available but a selection of these types of foodstuffs.) The Scheme Manager told me that,

'the foodstuffs are cooked by the elderly residents in their flats and brought to the communal lounge at eleven in the morning when the meeting starts each Wednesday. Although it is officially scheduled to end at one o'clock they appear and drift away after they have attended, eaten, spent a little while either sitting or talking with another person. They control it and should rename it. The name does not reflect what they do.'

There are some residents present who never attend the coffee morning, such as those who are otherwise occupied in their social life or like to keep a distance apart from fellow residents. The attendees consist of mainly women who attend church and mainly those men who are family orientated or are socially isolated and describe themselves as 'keeping themselves to

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<sup>70</sup> A scheme that is not culturally or ethnically determined.

themselves'. Family orientated Mr. Baker occasionally attends. Still, the other men will attend when there is a vital issue, and part of the meeting becomes an official meeting. As indicated by Mr. Taylor who, on one occasion, told me, 'I am here to listen to what they have to tell us about security. I would not usually come to the coffee mornings.' Usually there are fifteen regular attendees but some of the regular attendees only attend the coffee morning that takes place in their building and not the other building. Otherwise, approximately ten regulars attend regardless of the location. Although the occasion is an informal one, there are formalities to the structure. The Housing Officer also takes part in alternate coffee mornings and socialises with his tenants, dividing his time between sitting in the communal lounge and in the staff office where residents can consult him concerning their specific rent issues, housing repair and maintenance problems.

The Housing Officer and Scheme Managers are all black and from a Jamaican background<sup>71</sup> and they share in the meal and usually understand the nuances brought to the coffee morning by my informants. Indeed, there is a running joke on the Housing Officer because his love of food is well known; his colleagues and the residents tease him, saying that he is only present to eat the food. I observed him laughing with them as he jokingly agreed, at the same time piling up his plate with goodies. My informants are glad that he enjoys the food and joins in the conversations with them as well as taking their advice on cooking tips.

Although the event sounds colourful and varied it does not cater for all of the residents whose perspective of a coffee morning is based on the traditional English one. Mr. Harvey remarked,

'I don't eat those heavy foods anymore. I eat more vegetables nowadays.'

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<sup>71</sup> This Housing Officer post was not specified as a post requiring a black worker. It was a generic role that worked with housing clients within a certain area in Lambeth and the scheme fell into this area.

Mr. Harvey further comments that,

'the coffee morning is all wrong there should be cakes, scones, biscuits and not the heavy food. They have confused the coffee morning'.

Despite his misgivings about the food content, others benefit. Mrs. Elgin commented one day,

'I was hungry because I had an early medical appointment and only had a light breakfast, I knew I could eat something here when I came back.'

Also men such as Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Truman and Mr. Earles enjoy home made food that they rarely have the opportunity to eat so it is a subtle way of enabling those more reliant on pre cooked meals, or a meal prepared by a Carer, to enjoy a home cooked meal. Therefore, the collective gathering *is* important.

Interesting themes flow from the coffee morning social gatherings that affect their sense of unity. Mutual support is available through the sharing of food that is laden with caring on a practical level being provided by the more able residents to the more needy ones. Thereby, a collective consciousness silently and discreetly forms through their alliances in this meeting as well as other mutually supporting events), as they mingle with each other despite their differences, sharing an engagement in their West Indian culture. The meeting is therefore an important marker of unification where important discussions concerning the scheme also take place. However, the differences between them surfaces on two levels. First, those who seek to fit into the traditional form of coffee morning, open to manoeuvring into mainstream cultural practices and those, in the majority, who combine to change the event into one with a very strong West Indian flavour. Second, this highlights divisions that permeate through other activities compounded by the forming of small cliques and sub groups fuelling petty bickering through exclusory judgement between them.

These co-existed within this complex community. Indeed this event reflects their re-inventions of the traditional British events to suit their Westindianness. I also found similar adaptations occurred with the parties, development of Day Centres and churches in the community that the elderly people supported and attended. As attendees, they give power to these alternative service provisions by virtue of using them, similar to Bhabha's (1994) suggestion that cultures influence each other and migrants assert their place through the interaction.

The in-between space, an abstract conceptualisation according to Bhabha, is also a space that provides the terrain for the individual to exert their sense of self and to develop a new identity (1994:1-2). Therefore, the migrant's identity exists here in-between boundaries in the liminal space and opens up the possibility for connecting the polarities at either side of the boundary. 'Here cultural hybridity can entertain difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha 1994:4) although the borderline engagements of cultural difference may be both consensual and conflictual (1994:2). I believe my informants' negotiating experience and their agency consequently affected their differences. So influenced by Franz Fanon, who asserted 'the colonial subject is always overdetermined from without' Bhabha conversely acknowledges the external influences on the individual psyche (Bhabha 1994:43) that I utilise.

This meeting point, in the in-between place is described by Bhabha as a hybrid cultural space, is located ... in the beyond that is an 'intervening space ... a place of intervention in the here and now ... through the innovations that interrupt the performance of the present' (Bhabha 1994:7). It therefore represents 'a borderline existence, at the crossroads of history, bridging the home and the world, with the loss of absolutes ... that is also a communal space' (Bhabha 1994:13-17). Bhabha calls upon Emmanuel Levinas (Bhabha 1994:15-16), who asserts it is a space 'where the real world appears'.

I too found instances where my informants affected by the legacy of their colonial encounter and external political, economic and social factors, localised state policies and procedures. They were also self-determining in their

engagements with each other, the host culture inside and outside of the scheme. In doing so they found particular placement as a heterogeneous group in their real world.

### *Mutual support*

Before turning to the other social interactions that harboured more stark divisions it is important to acknowledge further forms of mutual aid that help to subtly bind the community. For despite the different groupings, oppositions are transcended at times, particularly at funerals. The elderly people are very philosophical about death. Comments such as, 'it comes to us all' and 'there is no reason to be afraid of death' were commonly stated, being a reminder of their inevitable future demise, while raising a sense of camaraderie from the departure of fellow elders. My informants are therefore self-determining in their response to funeral arrangements. They use the ritual practice of the 'nine night'<sup>72</sup> to mark the end of the life cycle. Here they control their environmental space to conduct the traditional ritual practices this involves.

By taking control of the events mentioned above the elders are actively engaged in social change. Certainly, Gramsci (1990) thought the new strategy needed for social change must involve using real men<sup>73</sup>, to define their own existence, through their self-consciousness. He suggested change could come about by the changes occurring through the cultural processes taking place in everyday life. This he thought could build a collective consciousness to attack the political action of the intellectual foundation of bourgeois society. Boggs (1976) highlights that this would be complicated because Gramsci suggested the complex state made penetration through the 'ensemble of relations' difficult,

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<sup>72</sup> The term, nine night, refers to ritual gatherings of family and friends of the deceased in honour of the deceased person, the purpose is to help the spirit move peacefully along its journey, and is held on the ninth day after the death occurred. This ritual process consists of friends and family visiting the home of the deceased to support their family every day. It places an emphasis on the ninth night after the deceased died. On the ninth night within a large gathering, hymns, prayers and stories of remembrance are performed, social activities such as dominoes may be played and they remember the deceased by sharing of thoughts about them.

<sup>73</sup> I understand this comment to refer to 'ordinary people', rather than referring to a gender bias.

leading to powerless sub-cultural fragmentation (Boggs 1976:122-124). Nonetheless, Gramsci suggested that 'the oppressed must demystify the ideological armour of the status quo and create their own "integrated culture" ' (Boggs 1976: 123). However, I found that in asserting their cultural and individual identities my informants were separated by personal differences. I also suggest the elders occupied a sub-cultural position in society that arises paradoxically because they asserted their will to engage in their funeral ritual and other aspects of socialisation that operates different to the British cultural practice. Although my informants are not engaged in a revolutionary overthrow, I suggest they do use their personal agency and others work with them and on their behalf, to find a place in society. Here the negotiation is peaceful being without conflict but born out of the desire to engage in familiar activities in opposition to the status quo expectations within the context of British culture. Therefore the elders, the wider West Indian community with others are allowed by state administrators to negotiate their activities that are allowed to find appropriate placement in the community.

Two funerals show the negotiations and self-determination of my elderly group to express their identity and culture. Funerals subtly provided unifying features, yet through these events different factions are allowed their space, peacefully with respect regardless of their differences. One funeral concerned Mrs. Harris's friend, who lived outside the scheme locally in Brixton, the other funeral was that of Mrs. Jarvis who lived in the scheme. They belonged to different social worlds, the first a streetwise man, the second a devout Christian. On both occasions the residents were involved in the funerals. The deceased's family and friends invited to come together and support each other within the scheme that also welcomed non-residents, their friends and family.

Mrs. Harris told me,

'my friend was a regular visitor to the scheme, played dominoes with me and the other residents but died suddenly from an asthma attack. Me and one of my daughters are involved in the funeral



arrangements with his family and friends. We are using the communal lounge area to hold his nine night. He was a close friend and a lot of people in here knew him, I will do my best to help his family pay their last respects to him.'

His nine night ritual was held at the scheme. On this occasion, again, they had plenty of food such as curry goat, rice, chicken, alcohol, with music in the background and of course, dominoes games were played. In addition, they prayed in his honour. Emotions mixed as both sorrowful feelings and acceptance of his passing were expressed. On the day of his funeral the scheme was used as a meeting point and a mini bus came to take the residents, family and friends who lived nearby to the church for the funeral. I observed Mr. White, Mrs. Harris and her daughter as well as Mr. Smith and a couple of others from the scheme accompany the party. (They also represent mostly those who otherwise kept out of the mainstream structured communal events.)

Similarly, residents came together for the funeral of Mrs. Jarvis. She was regarded well, as she was a respectable church-going person. Both her nine night and funeral day gathering took place in the communal facilities. It was reported to me by the Scheme Manager Andrea, that, 'her nine night event was very good and that a lot of people gathered in her honour'. I observed everyone respect her passing on the day of the funeral. However, only the similarly minded church going residents attended on this occasion and met in the communal lounge after the church service and attendance at the cemetery. I noticed the lounge full to capacity.

My field notes describe the event. Once more, there were traditional dishes such as, curry goat, rice, chicken and fish on display. There were lots of drinks that included water, a variety of soft drinks, fruit juice and alcohol such as brandy and rum. Her friends and family sang hymns and read from the Bible. Mrs. Jarvis had attended church throughout her life, health permitting, so many people attended from her local church in Brixton in addition to her family and

friends. The deceased family managed the kitchen and brought in a lot of cooked food for everyone to eat. People sat on the sofas and around the tables and chairs in the lounge. Many individual conversations were taking place and the mood was upbeat. One daughter of the late Mrs. Jarvis told one of her relations, 'now that we have seen each other again we must keep in touch and see each other more often'. The funeral therefore brought her family closer together and although a sad occasion, it was pleasant and the family made everyone, including myself, feel welcome as they gave Mrs. Jarvis a fond farewell.

It emerges that the differences remained between my informants but their differences could become secondary at funerals because death was mutually respected by them all, allowing their differences to take a back stage place and mourning to take place, whilst they remain peacefully segregated. Here the residents were able to engage in their cultural practices, assisted by the scheme workers so together they redefined the use of the communal space to meet their needs.

### *Cultural and British state associations*

As stated above the social pursuits highlight the mergers and separations that my informants encounter in British society. The social events of the two cultures interface with each other. Through further assessment of the meeting point, I uncover how the differences between my informants and the host culture can be lead to separateness whilst acknowledging one can overcome divisions through interaction. Looking at the in-between communal space asserted by Bhabha(1994) I therefore uncovered a place of unity as opposed to separation.

Interestingly, social and cultural differences serve a dual purpose for they are also paradoxically bonding mechanisms. Social interactions bond some elders to the state and others with each other within their cultural specificity. This heightened as the differences are marked between those less able and those more able, with the less able more state orientated.

With reference to links to the external local community some frequented Day Centres provided for the elderly in the borough. This organisation represents a traditional British establishment with traditional Day Centre activities that is personalised into an acceptable West Indian environment. Here my informants and other attendees engaged in social activities such as sewing, sharing lunch with others, going on daytrips to the seaside or other places of interest. They can also obtain counselling and advice services. Mr. Taylor, a former alcoholic, who turned to Christianity in his mature years, introduced me to the Day Centre for black elderly people based at the church he and other informants attend, that is situated in central Brixton. Whilst I was there the Day Centre manager explained,

'All of the attendees are black elderly people of West Indian origin. The workers and volunteers are also black of West Indian origin. In particular of Jamaican origin. They like their music so in the days we have music in the background that is familiar to them. The music reflects what they listen to in the homes or social environments, from the sixties upwards, so we play ska, reggae, soul. You see here we look after them and give them what they want.

This puts them at ease and provides a non-threatening and appreciative environment for them to relax in. It also provides an opportunity to keep them informed of changes in the West Indies because we get copies of newspapers that carry news of back home. They buy the West Indian paper 'The Gleaner'. In the Gleaner they like to read the article by the Pastor<sup>74</sup>, because it makes them laugh. The jokes are very culturally related to Jamaican life with comical interpretations. This is because the Pastor's response is very light hearted and usually makes those who understand the joke laugh hard. They also read the local Voice newspaper, a newspaper created for the West Indian and African community in Britain. These papers keep them informed about what is happening in the West

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<sup>74</sup> The columnist invites readers to write to him in the role as an 'agony aunt'.

Indian community in Britain and they discuss some issues. They get a chance to sit and talk with other elderly people and share other elderly people's experiences. This includes talk of back home although many have not returned since coming here. As many of us are often on the move we can also share experiences of others who travel to Jamaica, Canada or America to visit relatives.

We got the use of this space from the black led church with a predominantly West Indian congregation so many of those who come to the Day Centre also come to the church. Our centre occupies this space on the first floor that is a large hall that has a kitchen area to the side of the hall where refreshments are served. There is a pool table where the attendees challenge each other and a small table where dominoes are played next to an entertainment area with the stereo and television. Our office here is quite small in this corner. Next to it we have the sewing area in the main hall where there are two sewing machines that are used to make objects such as cushions. In the rest of the hall space there are tables and chairs where they sit, eat lunch and talk to each other, near the kitchen area.

They feel understood and welcomed into this environment by others and the workers who are part of their cultural experience who understand their language and style of communication. For although they have lived in England for a long time they still speak their patois and keep their West Indian identity. So mixing with others like them puts them at ease in this environment where they are able to just be themselves rather than having to adjust themselves in order to be appreciated and understood.

Many are lonely when left alone and I see many uplift their spirits after attending our centre for a while because they make friends and support each other.'

For sure, I observed the elderly people telling jokes and laughing, this included jokes about their experiences, finding humour in pain, because mutual aid is important and bought the helper and the helped together. Mr. Taylor told me,

'I look forward to going to the Day Centre, or my club as I call it. It is a friendly place and I have made new friends there. I am a part of the dominoes team and this is good. I usually eat my lunch there. It is very nice and saves me cooking. I am with my people so it is great.'

Alternatively, Day Centres may not be culturally specific where the aim is to provide for all cultures from a Eurocentric point of view. Mr. Griffiths attends a Day Centre in Knights Hill, specifically designated for those with a mental illness. The state's health service provides this service. The Health and Social Services departments assessed the attendees and a place allocated to provide social contact for individuals. It is fifteen minutes drive away to the north of the borough. I attended the Day Centre with him.

My field notes state that the morning starts with the bus picking us up from the scheme and collecting the other attendees from their homes in the local area. The small group of seven sit together in one of the meeting rooms. The group facilitator opens the day with a morning hymn singing session. Mr. Griffiths likes this because he is quite a strong singer and knows all the words to the hymns. Mr. Griffiths was more lucid than the others in the group and his ability to remember all the words to each hymns put him in high regard and this makes him happy. He smiled and it was obvious he felt proud of himself as he walked confidently around the club. This service helped to boost his self-worth and self-esteem and it was clear for all to see. He would tell others and myself at the scheme how well he was doing at the Day Centre and that they thought well of him there. Afterwards, they have tea and biscuits and sit together for discussion time, but this is quiet because they do not say much. Later, lunch is provided for them.

Mr. Griffiths also told me that the food was very nice, but it appeared, to me, tasteless in comparison to the dishes prepared at the sheltered housing scheme. Nonetheless, I noticed that the food was prepared off the premises, pre-cooked and packaged as a convenience meal. This consisted not of traditional West Indian foodstuffs but tinned soup, mashed potatoes, chicken and a vegetable, followed by a scoop of ice cream and cake. Given that the mental health state of those that attended caused much confusion, it appears that they are less concerned about the cultural relevance of food and rather more concerned about meeting their basic life needs.

This is clearly a very vital and important place for Mr. Griffiths to visit because it helps his confidence and self worth, in addition to providing him with social contact and company to minimise his feeling of loneliness. Although not culturally specific it met his particular needs so helped him to associate and belong in the centre.

The Day Centres therefore served two opposing purposes, one, to bring two cultures together, second, to separate cultures. Nevertheless, this mirrors the reality of cultural and racial divisions that still exist in the community. These are not forced divisions because it is evident that those able chose their preferential affiliation and join the black Day Centre. Through this choice they exert their will to actively make changes to suit themselves as suggested by Gramsci (1990), this positioning further helped them to define their place of belonging similar to Bhabha's (1994) suggestions above. Who knows, if able, Mr. Griffiths might make the same choice, nevertheless, the state looks after him and made choices for him.

### *'Outsiders' within*

Ms. Duncan, a spinster without children, who is hard of hearing and wheelchair bound, resulting from a stroke, was also affected by her questionable mental health state. As a result, she was viewed as confused by staff and fellow residents. Therefore, she is set apart from socialisation with others within the

scheme and it created a barrier to her associations with the state, particularly as her expressions were challenging and confrontational towards the state workers. She also challenges those workers from her own culture using the issue of mistrust among her own people as the point of her complaint. She therefore challenges the state and the notion of BME provisions because although a recipient she criticised it and pushes against the familiarities it brings.

Her regular contacts are the Scheme Manager and visits mainly from her Pastor. However, Ms. Duncan told me that,

‘I blame the Scheme Manager for my being in a wheelchair. It is her fault. I do not trust her. I still have to ask for her help though because I do not get much support from any one. Even the Pastor who comes here is taking things from me.’

Nonetheless, I observed the Pastor taking things to her rather than from her without permission. He also introduced his friend who came to help her move things around occasionally and to change light bulbs and so on. I saw her offer and insist that they take tins of food and a tonic mixture she gave them. However, her confusion resulting from her mental health condition creates further problems as demonstrated by the Scheme Manager’s statement, ‘I am afraid of what she may make up and report about me and get me in trouble’. She warned me to be careful when I went into her home alone. Such fears excluded Ms. Duncan from greater involvement in addition to her seeming snobbery.

Separateness and difference fuelled loneliness that became a problem for quite a number of my informants, who were not separated by mental illness but personal circumstances that affected and curtailed socialisation with others. For example, Mr. Truman explained,

'I spend most of my time in my flat. Although this allows me to rest it does get a bit boring to be home alone. I gave up smoking a few months ago but I smoke when I feel down, depressed like and a bit bored. I spend most of my time sleeping in my flat since I moved to the scheme. I have not seen my friends since moving here because most of my friends are still married so they have their partners to keep them company, unlike myself. Lately, I just want peace and quiet although sometimes I feel lonely, but I have to bear it'.

Such lonelier ones were mainly those not close to their family who did not engage in a club or Day Centre activity. They were not active members of the church or church-goers. Mr. Bailey's thoughts bring to light his inner dilemma as he explains,

'Cooking and looking after myself is a burden. I look back to my trip to Jamaica when I stayed with my brother. He is a socialite who is busy running a gospel choir and has the companionship of his family around him. If I was in Jamaica with him now I too would have the companionship of his family around me. Instead, I am often bored and feel time is dragging around. The days and evenings are long and time passes slowly. I do not feel too well some days so I do not always go out. The television mostly does not interest me, except the programme Question Time, which is my favourite television programme. When it is on I stay up to one o'clock, still, sleeping sometimes remains a burden. To end the loneliness I thought of going to America to live with the mother of two of my children. Although she is not very well staying with her would give me companionship.'

Therefore being around others in the scheme was comforting, never mind what goes on. It also provides a space where they find more alliances although they are personally lonesome. Even though the group comprises of differences, their power is still important. It transpires that my informants, with others, are able to



use their agency to create meaningful activities that meet their cultural needs. These activities are different from state provisions that do not fully recognise their needs. They make their culture visible and push through the boundaries set by policies. Through creating their own arenas, they both enable their cultural activities to become normalised in their scheme and de facto accepted by the state. Thereby their actions borne out of their difference to state assumptions about them effect social transformations in their real daily lives and continually affect state policy that became more flexible, though not officially or immediately changing.

### *The dominoes group*

Despite respect and reputation seen as opposing forces or contradictory terms, it opens up a debate to understand how West Indians developed their cultural practices when interfacing with others. Indeed Sutton (cited in Olwig 1990:96) suggests that complex values developed in the Caribbean however Caribbean people had little control, as they acquired imposed colonial gender structures. On the other hand, Abrahams (cited in Olwig 1990:96) acknowledges the conflict inherent in their engagement with their evolving social structures and suggests there is a conflict between reputation and respect. Olwig (1990) proposes that both men and women were involved in the struggle to develop their cultural practices against the colonial power that tried to control them. Through her examination of the tea meetings she showed how they exerted their Afro-Caribbean identity, particularly as the tea meetings were different to the temperate Methodists gatherings although they adopted a respectable appearance. Similarly, I find both my male and female informants creatively challenge the state impositions and create events to meet their cultural needs.

Here Bakhtin's (1984) term carnivalesque is useful to understand the agency of my informants as they facilitate social change by manipulating events in order to assert themselves. I evidence this with reference to the dominoes group, party, coffee morning, use of grocer, and church activities where they set the rules that run counter to expectations at the scheme and in the local

community. The term allows a focus on power relations, where society is mocked, or the world is turned around through normal life that is accentuated as opposed to maintaining a controlled life. Such actions of resistance are powerful (Foucault 1979). Certainly the term carnivalesque refers to rebellious social actions, often a parody, stemming from medieval carnivals where the ideological authority was inverted, albeit it temporarily during the carnival. The term is used broadly to explain social actions that break apart oppression through satire. In relation to my informants, the coffee morning, parties, dominoes group, funeral arrangements and the social engagements of my elderly folk broke traditions or the norm practice in British society. My informants and workers made the events different, partially satirical<sup>75</sup> whilst subtly changing traditional rituals to their own rituals. Even their seemingly passive actions and their omissions were also acts of power through non-engagement. For in not doing something the way the state wanted meant they were doing something else of their own. These present processes and actions that change events and make them powerful as they meet their needs according to their rules and sanction each other according to their codes.

Observations of the dominoes group and the New Year Party show how entrenched the dividing notion of respectability is in the community that underpins the forming of different factions. Mrs. Chambers explained the opening ritual in preparation for the social activity of playing dominoes,

'I make sure I water the flowers in the pots so that they look nice. I take out the plastic cups from the kitchen and put them in the lounge. The players bring their liquor and I put them on the table for the group. I also put out peanuts and any other snack they want. Mr. Bailey always plays the music for the evening so brings out his stereo player. My partner along with other residents and a couple of their friends who do not live in here also come to play. I don't play

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<sup>75</sup> The elders are aware they are pushing boundaries and seemed to enjoy asserting themselves, seeing the funny side of the predicament and game they entered into by bending and flouting rules, continually adjusting things to suit their needs, and getting away with it.

dominoes at all. I can't play it. I stay for a while and maybe watch TV then I go up to my flat.'

Other residents that wander in and out of the lounge for casual conversation soon leave and the dominoes group left alone as they command residency of the space until the early hours of the following morning. Formed of a small number of people who are loyal regulars, there are four (respectable) core members, three reside in the scheme the other person is Mrs. Chamber's partner who lives in the Brixton area. In addition, an external friend of Mrs. Harris makes up the regular number and occasionally other friends residing outside the scheme join them. They asked me if I could play dominoes as they invited me to play with them. I informed them that I could play but I was not as good as I observed them to be. After joining, at my turn to inject my dominoes, they waited patiently as I thought about my move whilst at their turn they simultaneously slammed theirs down. In addition to being quick handed they are just as quick witted with jokes as they playfully teased each other.

They represent a closed group with boundaries set with regards to joining that Mrs. Chambers' partner, a softly spoken man outlined,

'We do not let rude and noisy people play dominoes with us, just decent people. We like to play and have fun and not argue with one another. Mr. Smith joined us to play dominoes in the past. He likes to drink a lot of alcohol and while playing he drank a lot of alcohol so became drunk. He also lost his games and became abusive in his behaviour and started swearing at us. He is therefore no longer allowed to play dominoes with us.'

Interestingly, Mr. Smith wandered into the lounge earlier that evening and he looked in and whispered to me,

'I like to play 'dominoe' but they won't let me play with them... because I use bad language'.

They maintained the boundaries that they set between themselves marking their differences although they share some similarities across the boundaries. They do acknowledge their similarities for they moved into the scheme due to their vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, they encounter personalities and patterns of behaviour that they would have chosen to avoid if they had the power to do so. As a result, fear and disrespect exist between one 'type' and the 'other'. So the playing of dominoes attracts criticism from the other residents who not want outsiders and the 'even more unknown' to enter because they fear this unknown potential behaviour, although the dominoes sessions undertaken are without altercations. Nevertheless, I think, for those involved and some of the other residents they welcome the spirit of fun and vitality it brings to the scheme.

### *Bickering*

The opposing differences lead to factional bickering. Bickering was another technique they use that is embedded in disrespect for each other. Fear becomes a conduit of the divisions and underlies the bickering between them. The temporary Housing Officer, Ms. June, highlights that they are not all respectful or respected because,

'Many came from the local Brixton front line<sup>76</sup> and this explains things. I thought the older age group would work more together, be leading fulfilling lives and growing up from their younger negative issues. Unfortunately, they expect to behave the same in here as they did living in that local Brixton area. Some residents are on crack, however the support worker deals with it. They argue, fight and have a negative way of behaving. I thought I would get some wisdom from them, but I did not get it. Instead there are neighbour disputes and a tenant has attacked the cleaner physically.'

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<sup>76</sup> The 'front line' refers to a run down, poor area where illegal activities occur. In this case a high percentage of West Indians, predominantly Jamaicans lived and 'operated' on it.

Some people are letting their children stay in their flats rather than pay the £5 per night for the guest room, others moan about this. This is also a problem for us because our insurance does not cover children staying in the flats at night. Those without children complain about those with children and their comings and goings. When I receive neighbour disputes all I can do is write a general letter to all the tenants to remind them of the rules because in the end no one would give witness statements if asked.'

Mr. Smith frequents places where people congregate in public, places such as street corners, public benches and bars, among alcoholics, criminals and drug addicts, so the places and people are not regarded as respectable by the other elders with different lifestyles. Similarly, Mr. James attends a café where similar people dwell. They situate themselves in venues that my other elderly informants do not want to go to and with people who they want to avoid. However, they are content with their choices. Mr. Smith is in his sixties, is a fit man confident of his environment. Alternatively, Mr. James is beginning to see his vulnerabilities, particularly as he has experienced breathing difficulties. They socialise in areas with illegal activities, increasingly among new people who are different to previous migrants and are more threatening, bringing fear of the unknown to their established social places. A walk out with Mr. Smith provided insights into his social world. Mr. Smith said,

'I like walking and I walk a lot around Brixton to occupy my time. Walking is a hobby and it keeps me in good health. I go out everyday, I visit local pubs and have a drink, a chat and laugh with my friends. I meet my friends in the park and in an area in central Brixton outside the Brixton Library.'

This is an area frequented by street drinkers, homeless people, drug dealers and users. He asked me to accompany him there one day because he was

going to 'buy somet'ing'<sup>77</sup> and he wanted me to keep his company. He admits to smoking cannabis and needed to acquire it. The police tried to stop drug-trafficking by preventing people congregating in this area, and although a large board in the street serves to warn loiters and inform them of the crack down operation, people are still milling around. Mr. Smith is aware of the affect this police presence has on curtailing people meeting up there and the affect this has on his life, and says,

'I will miss being able to hang out here because if I have nothing to do in the day I will come here to talk to my friends. I like a drink, I drink Tenants Super and I admit that I drink a fair bit. I get drunk a lot as well because I am an alcoholic.'

He is a jolly man who definitely swears quite a bit as part of his usual discourse. However since he is mostly under the influence of drink, he apologises constantly, nevertheless continues. He further says,

'I drink with these people and associate with them because they are good company. I meet them every day. I know about these people and I know how to go around them. Some of them are very bad people and carry weapons. But I mostly love women because I am a loving guy. I have had quite a few women in my time. In fact I spend my day looking for women. I am a womaniser. I look for women for amusement because I joke<sup>78</sup> with them. I have a white woman, a girlfriend, I visit every day in the afternoon for companionship.'

Although not a confessed womaniser, nor an alcoholic, Mr. James is similarly involved in his vice, gambling. He told me,

'I keep myself to myself in the scheme. I go out mostly to meet my friends. I know some of the others in here do not like me, what I do or

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<sup>77</sup> The 'something' here refers to marijuana, termed ganja.

<sup>78</sup> I flirt with them.

where I go, but it is my business what I do and who I see. I like to gamble a little with my friends and go to the café where I know criminals also go. I am not bad though. I am not religious in the sense to go to church but I believe in God and I think I am a good person. I would not hurt a fly.'

I have noticed that in the meeting he attended at the scheme to discuss security issues he got agitated during the conversation. Other residents commented that he was a bit ignorant<sup>79</sup> due to this trait. They were therefore a bit cautious of him. Although he can be charming, polite and communicative with me there are some others who appear almost afraid of Mr. James. Perhaps it is because he carries a stern face at times, observes quietly and often responds with seeming abruptness.

The Scheme Manager told me,

'I have to be on the ball with them who mix out there on the street because they will bring in outsiders of all kinds. Some are wanted by the police, carry guns and some are homeless. I have found their friends sleeping on the floor of the laundry. On another occasion the Police called to investigate a crime. These things cause neighbour disputes and unrest in here.'

The elders therefore remain fairly individualised and go about their external activity alone, as their focus is outside more than inside the scheme. For these men were frowned upon by those attending church as well as by others who did not engage in illegal activities. The church attendees frowned upon them as drunkards, or mixing with the less desirable elements in society that was most pronounced when undesired external activities enter the scheme and conflicts arise.

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<sup>79</sup> The use of 'ignorant' here refers to being short tempered, commonly used in Jamaican parlance.

### *New Year, old things*

The New Year brings no change but is a marker of separation rather than forgetting differences. The different approach to the New Year party reflected divisions among the elders. It followed that the type of people that attended were opposed to those who did not and visa versa. The Scheme Manager told me.

'The party is solely organised by the residents themselves and I have nothing to do with it because some of their activities break the rules.' Ms. Girlie and Mr. White organised the music, food and drinks. The previous day Mr. White, Girlie<sup>80</sup> and her family bought fish and began the preparations in the communal kitchen. There is an entrance fee but this is against the rules. This money is used to fund the refreshments. The party is held in the communal lounge and dining area in one of the buildings in the scheme. They bring in their own disc jockey from outside and large speaker boxes. They like a mixture of soul and reggae music so have a good time but other residents do not go and do not approve of their antics.

I observed that those who said they would attend the party were residents who were most friendly with both the organisers and the people who liked to drink and frequent pubs such as Mr. Smith. The event is a loud affair that carries on into the early hours of the following morning. Other residents who do not attend report that, 'some a dem carry on wid dem language'<sup>81</sup> with reference to the conversations and drunken arguments overheard.

The Scheme Manager remarked also that she did not look forward to the party and was glad that she was going on holiday to visit her family. She therefore indicated that she did not want to get involved in their affairs because she had

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<sup>80</sup> Both decided not to participate formally in the research but did contribute to it. Indeed Girlie spoke to me on numerous occasions and Mr. White allowed an interview and invited me to his birthday party.

<sup>81</sup> Some of them argue and use bad language.



previously seen them in action and did not want to be held responsible if anything got out of hand.

It transpired that it was a peaceful event and enjoyed by those who attended. I remark here that it is interesting that the primary people who were involved in this event were those who sought to remain outside of my research, although they did speak to me a lot. Some eventually, become involved. They form a more obviously rebellious element in the scheme that both flout rules and regulations and risk their residency and potentially put the Scheme Manager at risk, thus imposing their counter hegemony, similar to Gramsci's (1990) application. For here, the crisis ensues because their personal agency becomes powerful and challenges the state authority, as they create their space of belonging. They are therefore the creators of this crisis and the controllers concerning management. For they get 'their way' and the state moves aside, does not oppose them, sanction them or credit them. However, the inaction enables the differences to muster more breathing space and power to sustain this status quo.

### *Impact of the church*

In opposition to those seeking a place in society based on the reputation of the group they belong to, others seek belonging to people and activities viewed as respectable. The church's multifunctional impact continues to reaffirm the consensus of Christians being moral citizens in addition to providing healing, hope and belonging as Mrs. Scott outlines,

'I found church-going a comfort as well as an enjoyable experience. It provides a welcome break from the normal daily activity and it gives me strength to meet my daily challenges. It also helps me to remember that I am not alone although I am often really physically alone and separated from my family.'

Indeed, Mr. Taylor pronounced 'I like to get involved in the community and I do charity work for the elderly, I do shopping for sick and frail people. I also help them out when they need money.' The church is therefore an enjoyable source of social interaction, and allows my informants to affirm their status as able elders undertaking useful roles in society.

However differing pathways are taken between the Christians highlighted by Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Baker whose differing styles of worship impact on their lives in different ways and they get their needs met enough to find a sense of belonging, although sometimes it can prove to be paradoxically a place of partial exclusion. Mrs. Mason's church attendance serves to highlight the partial exclusion and highlight the effect that church going can have on the life of an elderly woman who is desperate for change, finding it hard to come to terms with her past and the associated hardships she now faces. The church she attends started in Birmingham but has a strong Caribbean focus with sister churches in Jamaica as well as America. The cross-cultural mix is reflected in the congregation, though predominantly comprising of West Indian females, leadership was multicultural including European white, Asian and Afro-Caribbean people. Mrs. Mason started attending the church a year ago, mainly for help to console her relentless inner sorrow. The church therefore represents hope for her as her agonising thoughts reflect,

'... before I went to the church I was tormented by an evil spirit that caused me sleepless nights because I was constantly worrying. This church prays for people and for their lives to improve, exorcising evil spirits. They make things to help us, like oils to anoint our body and throw in the home, key rings for us to carry for protection and cassette tapes that have recordings of the services for us to hear to console us and show us how to overcome tragedies. I have some, I use them to try and lift up my spirit. I have faith in the Lord because having a strong religious belief and knowing the holy-spirit, helps me to feel connected to the church and get spiritual healing.

Although they prayed for me my life is no different. I believe that the church does not and perhaps cannot help me but the brethren do feel sorry for me. This comforts me but no one knows why my circumstances in life do not improve.'

Mrs. Mason is depressed and a worried woman, however when going to mainstream services and talking of spirits, mental health issues are often assumed. In this context, it is not and therefore becomes a safe place, where such talk is culturally accepted. Unfortunately, this safe place is also a place in which she assumes a marginal position.

Mrs. Mason's ambivalence about her belief that the church can change her misfortunes is continually tested and she is unsure of its true power to help her. This ambivalence about the church makes her set herself aside from the others and she singles herself out from the rest as unhealed. So although she belongs to the church that gives her hope she is unable to relate to it and get results from it, as she supposes the others do, heightening inabilities to belong to the group in the same way as others. She feels that she is different to them financially and cannot meet contributory costs, for example after the service they share an evening meal at the home of a church sister. However, Mrs. Mason says that she did not attend this because she felt embarrassed being unable to financially contribute to it with her peers. In addition, she is unable to pay the ten per cent tithes consequently waived. These circumstances limited her ability to fully engage with the church as a source of belonging because her attachment became quite remote, detached and marginal, yet paradoxically essential.

The church she attends was held on a weekend only, in a building otherwise used as a nursery during the week. The dress code is not strict and people wear neat and tidy clothes including jeans, skirts and casual tops. Although a few people had dressed up in formal attire wearing a shirt, tie and jacket or dress suits. The atmosphere is fairly serious but juxtaposed with smiling and welcoming faces and sentiments. Addressing newcomers the Leader, referred

to as Brother Joseph, explained that there was no pressure to join and that newcomers are welcome to stay for the rest of the service. As part of the congregation, I soon witnessed people getting in 'the spirit',<sup>82</sup> including Mrs. Mason. This is 'serious stuff' not for the faint hearted, so joining is a considered matter and this is emphasised. The various preachers interwove scriptures of the Bible serving to both teach a moral code as well as expose wrong doing and heal those affected. The songs sung to their specific music, a concoction mirroring pop and folk music intertwined with ethereal sounds with accompanying drum rhythms that is vibrant and moving. A few people have tambourines and all sing passionately and loudly. At the end a young woman volunteered to be healed, the Leader prayed for her, put his hand over her and she fell to the ground shaking, the evil was being exorcised out of her and provided the apex of the church service. Indeed the whole service is a somewhat frightening and deeply moving experience.

Alternatively Mrs. Parker's church is founded on a different premise, style of worship and leadership, described by the Pastor who said,

'I was informed that the church was formed in the sixties when black people were not welcome as readily as today in the white led churches.'

The Pastor's direct connection with the West Indies keeps the spirit of West Indian affiliation alive and provides a connection to 'back home' as well as cultural continuity for my elderly informants and the others who attend. I spoke with the Pastor and he said,

'I was delighted to get the opportunity to come to England to spend a year in this church. I fit straight in because the people share the same background and culture to the one I left. This made it very easy for me to attend the church and continue to preach similar to how I

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<sup>82</sup> 'In the spirit' refers to a trance-like state, rolling on the ground and shaking, calling out to the Lord and reciting the scriptures. Such practices are found in Jamaican Revival churches.

preached in Jamaica. It is an exciting opportunity to understand my community here.'

Mrs. Parker enjoys her presence and place in this church. She does not visit the church to receive spiritual healing for misfortunes in her life. She is quite contented, with good family involvement, so visits to worship comfortably with fellow Christians. A visit to her church highlights how her engagement, position and belonging to and in the church is different to Mrs. Mason.

Mrs. Parker makes an effort to dress in suits for church as well as the rest of the congregation at the Seven Day Adventist church in Railton Road. At least half of the congregation were elderly women and some elderly men although there were a few women in their late thirties and forties. It is a medium sized church with a Sunday school. These two Christian activities share a meeting space with a nursery that runs on the weekdays, bringing a wider social connection to the church-goers.

Mrs. Parker volunteered to read the Bible passages with confidence to the congregation. Thereafter they discussed the meaning and their understanding of it through sharing examples from their ordinary life experiences. They sang hymns from a hymn book. The songs are traditional British hymns and sung in quite a serious tone, without musical instruments supporting them as they create the rhythm with their voices, which remain moderate in volume and tone. Mrs. Parker also sang a solo for the congregation and her impressive voice reigned powerfully.

Mrs. Parker says,

'I look forward to going to the church, I have been going there for a long time and I feel very comfortable there. I like singing and they like my singing there also. Going there helps to keep me strong, I thank God that I am well and fit enough, at my age, to do all the things I desire so I put my trust in God and he will help me through. I like to

contribute to the church and belong to the Women's Group, we discuss the home, family problems with children or relationships and we support each other. Our worship is calmer, not so excitable as some others. [Referring to the spiritualist church, such as Mrs. Mason's].'

Similarly Mrs. Baker, a very family orientated person is a very devoted Christian and Deacon, attending the 'Church of God' church in Peckham on Sundays and on two weekdays. This church involves a worshipping style that presents a fusion of the two above, thereby providing a mixture of European traditional and West Indian spiritual influences.

Mrs. Baker has been a Christian for almost thirty years and told me that her faith kept her going after two of her children died in close succession to each other. She is confident that her pleas for help are answered. Through her strong faith she said to the Lord, after her son died, 'it was a pleasure to be able to have him to give back to you' in recognition of her strong faith. She also believes that her faithfulness to Christianity was rewarded when her life was spared. Mrs. Baker returned to Jamaica to live but also came back to England to receive treatment for her health. Whilst in hospital the doctors thought she had died, and an entry into her medical records suggests this, but hours after they failed to revive her she awoke to ask for a cup of tea. She recounts that medical staff were astounded by the phenomenon that occurred. Mrs. Baker puts it down to 'God's work' because she says that she has 'God in her life' and this has given her 'strength' through all her 'troubles and hard times'. She passes this sentiment onto her children and grandchildren saying that she feeds them 'spiritual food'. Her faith therefore goes beyond the connection with spiritual growth but incorporates bonding with her family.

For Mrs. Baker the church and her faith are a large part of her life and she occupies a leadership position within both. I went with her and her grandson to one of the convention events held at a church in Brockley as described in my field notes below.

The church mini bus collected us from the scheme and others in groups near their homes in Camberwell and Peckham. It was a warm summer's evening, and the energy from the congregation made it hot and sticky. Similarly, the service was stimulating and quite animated with the female preacher passionately sharing her thoughts on the scriptures. The Preacher said, 'this evening let us give thanks for life. We overcome difficulties so let us celebrate our survival and rejoice.' Agreement from the congregation resounded through the hall. There were cheers and cries of, 'blessed be the Lord. In God I put my trust' among other sentiments. The singing of uplifting songs separated the preaching. The service was lively with many joyful hymns, modern as well as traditional ones. The singing was strong projected in high volume. The backing music incorporated a mixture of musical genres that included reggae, jazz, gospel and soulful melodies. The congregation stood up, swayed in tune with the music and clapped their hands. It was a moving experience and emotions were expressed as people sang along wearing very expressive facial gestures, smiling widely. Gestures filled with a multiplicity of meanings included joy and thankfulness in their belief in the power of God. A young woman with an excellent signing voice and delivery of song sang a jazzy solo for the congregation that received rapturous applause.

The evening was more of a social event that served to bring people of faith from various churches together to praise the Lord. At the end there was an opportunity for the new members of the congregation to share their readiness for baptism and joining the church. The preacher and Mrs. Baker undertook what they call spiritual healing on members of the congregation by praying for them in an animated way with long and detailed reasoning asking bad things to leave them. Afterwards Mrs. Baker explained, 'I feel the spirit of the Lord move in me. It is a warm, happy feeling'. Indeed, it had been a warm, happy evening.

The involvement of these three informants with religion and church activities are different. At times, they were not always tolerant of each other's differences. Certainly, the differing life positions of my elders affected the subsequent styles of worship they joined. Religion and belonging to a church

unified them with others within a common activity but also re-iterated the marginal position that some occupy in their group that sets them apart from it and others.

### *Conclusion*

To address my question posed earlier, about whether the scheme is a place of unity fostering a sense of community, I suggest that there are a few things at play that express the sense of unity and community. Although my elderly informants undoubtedly benefited from being a resident in the scheme I also found separations as a result of their personal beliefs and preferred interests and socialising choices that created cliques and exclusions. These interest groups are mainly opposed according to their personal Christian beliefs and moral stance. Here the concepts of respectability and reputation proved useful to understand differences in choices of activities and conflicts between them.

The church activities generally were respected. However, an interesting theme emerges from the religious affiliations. For those attending church were seen as respectable, good in morals and through this gained a reputation associated with 'being better' than those without a religious affiliation and moral code. However, their differing religious practices can be paradoxical because although it brought religious believers together into a common category, they were also divided by their differences.

The elders represent the duality of complexity and cohesion and it appears that the differing individual personalities, in conjunction with the different pursuits they engage in, also created fear and worry between them. Therefore the more quiet and shy people feared the louder and more boisterous ones. In turn even the more boisterous fear the ones more silent as both profess they do not open up freely to each other but prefer to keep 'themselves to themselves'. This fosters a community of petty bickering, fear and mistrust of each other and others who enter the scheme.



In addition, some elders have individual complex issues and needs, and these feed into the difficulties between each of them. Consequently, the combined issues help to maintain the mistrust, distance and differences between them. These existing traits highlight a paradox in this community. The desire to build a community at the scheme, by the state, is difficult for my informants are part of the community due to residency and formal processes they must engage in. However, on a personal note, they remain separated not by cultural differences but by the cultural characteristics they maintain. Interweaving into this is a European type of snobbery on which they make their judgements and that underpins the differences. Still, there are men who do not fit into the main opposing groups concerned with reputation and respect, being marginalized outside of them because they are loners and keep mostly to themselves. They are those most estranged from kin.

The concept of the 'third space' allowed me to understand the hybridity and agency at work among the West Indian elders as they chose to affiliate with the groups that emerged and met their personal and cultural needs. Even here, as a member or participant of the group one may feel different to the other members, for example, Mrs. Mason became marginal in her church due to her inability to economically contribute to it like the others, and also because it is assumed she did not receive spiritual healing whilst others did.

Nevertheless, due to being West Indians in this community, my informants generated a sense of cultural specificity, as they and others, skilfully used their personal agency to create the 'coffee morning', parties and dominoes group, so creating groups of belonging. The concept of carnivalesque provided a construct to uncover how my informants enact certain events. This also interestingly exposes the opposing attitudes and dislikes between them. Yet, they interweave their culture into the state system to suit their specific needs. The Day Centres that most attend were managed and attended by other West Indians, predominantly Jamaicans, giving the elders a sense of understanding and shared experiences that they could associate with and belong to as a group member. This occurred mainly because within their locality there are still

significant numbers of West Indians and people from Jamaica to associate with. They therefore established their territorial space within the locality and developed a collective consciousness that binds them together, consequently facilitating their sense of belonging.

Yet, unlike Bhabha (1994) I find the negotiated place more complex than his notion that appears homogeneously harmonious because I propose this new space (and groups within it) is heterogeneous in nature and it still involves the notion of marginalisation and a sense of exclusion and otherness. Nevertheless, I agree with Bhabha that migrants over time create a sense of belonging in contemporary British society as different to the mainstream indigenous population. Indeed, they are part of multi-cultural Britain that currently embraces the notion of difference within it. Rather than external to it, incorporated as a part of the society in an internal subaltern placement and the boundary that Bhabha (1994) talks about that externally exclude them therefore seems to disappear. Nonetheless, their internal differences provide exclusion zones.

I therefore suggest that they form a community of differences because they skilfully negotiate around each other through their differences and with their similarities. However, care is shown at times lowering boundaries to pay respect to those that pass away at funeral activities as death not being feared is most respected. They therefore get along side by side and aside from each other as they manoeuvre around the cliques, ostracisms, judgements and exclusions, to form a multi-faceted and multi-functional complex community that harbours divisions, although they can unite. It is this process that fulfils the description within the term 'small garden, bitter weed'. Lastly, perhaps the individual aspect to being a scheme member is more vital to survival than developing a group affinity although they do sometimes 'love thy neighbour' but the practice of self-preservation prevails.

Lovell (1989) puts an emphasis on the transience of belonging and I believe this applies to my elderly informants as they engaged in transient movements

of which the scheme and the locality is another place to which they belong. Nevertheless, they bring individual differences that threaten the stability of the community so they manoeuvre and assert themselves to find the best fit.

## Chapter 7

### ***State bureaucracy and the elderly West Indian***

#### *Introduction*

'I am having problems with my managers because of who I am, the line I take, and my views about services for black elders'.

The statement above voiced by the outspoken Scheme Manager, Andrea, suggests an uneasy interrelationship between the workers in addition to the differences shown among my elderly informants in chapter 6. This expresses the inter-connected issues relating to the service provision to my informants at the sheltered housing scheme. It also highlights the complexity involved in providing and incorporating specialist provisions to people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Such problems exist within all levels of the state hierarchy so are mirrored in this institution (the sheltered housing scheme) and associated services. In turn, such difficulties affect my informants' sense of belonging. However, I am not looking at individual policies, for here I generally address the equalities ethos with inclusive guidelines governing the services at the scheme for the residents to maintain their well-being.

In this chapter I further examine the problematic interface between my informants and the state in this respect, particularly as I suggest that the state service provisions provide assistance in the role as surrogate family to my informants. I found a complex association embedded in this liaison that inextricably binds the issues together. I therefore seek to identify how my informants' identity and sense of belonging is negotiated in their interface with the role the state plays in their lives, exploring, through their personal agency and the staff on their behalf, how they challenge the dilemmas arising from their ethnicity and cultural identity as West Indians. Consequently, in addition to assessing the views of my elderly informants, I also interviewed the Area Manager, Scheme Managers, Housing Officer, Cleaner, Handyman, Social

Worker and the Care Manager, out of which interesting themes emerge (see questionnaires in Appendix B).

Throughout this chapter it is evident that negotiations are taking place through the meeting of two cultures, as suggested by Bhabha (1994), that provide avenues through which my informants and the state administrators on their behalf push through boundaries and crisis situations to effect changes as Gramsci (cited in Boggs 1976) proposed. These negotiations influence the service delivery to create a more beneficial response to my elderly informants. Nonetheless, due to the heterogeneous nature of the group and the ambivalence of some workers a unified response to issues is not forthcoming, and conflicts arise, some of which are resolved while others remain.

### *The equalities ethos*

This support service is one of the services provided by the state to Black Minority Ethnic (BME)<sup>83</sup> groups, under the banners of inclusion and diversity<sup>84</sup>. Based in Lambeth, the scheme adheres to Lambeth's Equal Opportunities policy strategy that is guided by the following sentiments.

'Equality and Diversity – Delivering Quality Services to all our Communities ... We are committed to the elimination of discrimination in service delivery ... on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, belief or any other grounds ... This statement stems from our commitment to valuing customers and staff. We are aware that we do not always provide services that are appropriate to the needs of our diverse communities and we

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<sup>83</sup> The term BME refers to Black Minority Ethnic as used by the state. It refers broadly to black people so therefore includes within this term many nationalities and cultures. In using this term I am referring to my black informants' race and cultural specificities. The term does collapse race with culture, so do the service provisions under my investigation. Further research may look at unpacking the BME terminology and application. My intention here is to examine the issues arriving from my informants' lived experience that I expressed in chapter 1.

<sup>84</sup> See Supporting People, Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy in Appendix C. This governs housing and support services.

positively want to do better.' (Lambeth's Equal Opportunities Statement in Appendix D).

In addition, the BME strategy governing housing and support services states the following.

'Our Core objectives of the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework is the promotion of fair access, diversity, inclusion, with performance objectives to ensure that providers of housing support have a framework for delivering services effectively to the BME community (2007:5). .... The ethnic diversity of our cities is continually changing, and there is evidence of extensive need for local authority services amongst black and minority ethnic BME communities (2007:2). ... Key priorities include investigating improvements in effective consultation mechanisms, accurate and inclusive information, and culturally appropriate services (2007:2). ... Acknowledging that ... there is over-representation of BME users in all client group need areas in services for older people, mental health (2007:4). .... Developing knowledge, awareness and competence in service delivery ... Knowledgeable and sympathetic support workers and Carers, providing culturally and personally appropriate services, in specialist and mainstream services to meet specific requirements of diet, culture, language and religion and mutual support' (2007:4).

The above quotes from the two documents encapsulate the ethos regarding inclusion through the provision of appropriate services to meet the needs of the diverse community and my elderly informants as members of that community. The policy also acknowledges that improvements could be made to better serve the diverse population. The notions of inclusion and exclusion emerge through this thesis, as I addressed in chapters 3 and 6. Indeed, in the previous chapter, I discussed how my research subjects formed a community of difference but skillfully negotiated their differences creating a sense of belonging to their local community. This existed on two levels, first, as West Indians with personal differences between them, second, as West Indians

whose ethnicity and culture are different to the indigenous culture. I wonder whether they can also find common ground to unite and challenge the issues they face concerning their ethnicity as well as their cultural difference?

The service provision at the scheme is provided within the ethos governing the concept of sheltered accommodation. In Chapter 3, I provided an explanation of the basic concept of the sheltered housing scheme that is twofold. First, whilst the bricks and mortar accommodation cater for my informants housing need, secondly, the associated services aim to cater for their personal, emotional and health needs to maintain well-being. As black West Indians the services also aim to respond to their specific cultural and racial differences. Difficulties arise because services should provide specialist provisions to clients that reflect their needs as black people, but they are delivered and received, on occasion, uncomfortably. For instance, difficulties manifest where health care needs regarding racial and cultural specifications are mismatched, such as a person requiring particular hair treatment because their hair is of different type requiring particular attention, and they do not receive it. Additionally, the requirement to continue their cultural heritage practices, such as food consumption and personal care activities come into conflict with mainstream notions concerning well-being. Therefore, the situation arises whereby the state provisions do not meet their specific needs and a crisis arises because of these difficulties.

The support delivered by the resident Scheme Managers who work closely with the elderly residents is prescribed in this housing context. Their role guided by social care legislation<sup>85</sup> and the associated funding regulations that are difficult to comprehend and implement. Yet, there is an expectation that the elderly resident will be able to engage with the support service and respond to the service monitoring requirements and service development strategies as part of the modern inclusive working partnership structure. I therefore discuss what arose in the interface between my elderly informants and the scheme management, as I assess how this contact affects their sense of belonging.

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<sup>85</sup> The Community Care Act 1990 regulates the services provided to all vulnerable people.

### *BME difficulties*

As elders my informants' health care needs increase and they develop a deepening bond with the state, in keeping with other elderly people who increasingly command support from the state. Indeed my informants, as black elders, experienced isolation and alienation from kin members and additionally discrimination and difficulties in obtaining access to state services (Blakemore and Boneham 1994). Nevertheless, my elderly informants are reliant on them and this association greatly affects their sense of belonging.

The support service comprises assistance that involves help with cleaning, undertaking minor repairs or maintenance of the home, providing advice and signposting the elderly person to the other advice agencies in the locality. The care service provides domiciliary care to them in their home and the provision of ready made meals.

The support and care services are designed by the government to 'bridge the gap' concerning personal needs that may not be met elsewhere. Or, where they are being met elsewhere by family or friends but are insufficient. So the state acts alone or in conjunction with the recipient and their associations. In addition, the scheme operates within a specific remit to cater for elderly Afro-Caribbean people reflected in the staffing complement and service provision under the direction of state policies. However, issues arise where policy and practice are not complementary to the ethos of the scheme, or meet the needs of my elderly informants as residents, that undoubtedly affect their sense of belonging. I uncovered that some of the workers were not in agreement with the approach taken by the state to provide ethnic and cultural specific services which raised problems and concerns amongst the staff group and my elderly informants as service recipients. It is also through this predicament that the issue of race and cultural difference acts as a separating device. I therefore reveal the issues embedded in the complexity of the state trying to meet the ethnic and cultural needs of my informants amongst the ambivalence of staff and dissatisfaction of the elders. It is therefore within this mismatch that interesting issues arise.



My informants are consequently caught within the wider debate concerning the understanding of cultural difference, and the on-going developments concerning race relations within the debate focused on inclusion. In this respect, I found my informants' identity and difference questionably celebrated and often inappropriately honoured. As a result, their experiences highlight the ambivalent space they occupy in terms of BME politics that unfolds in this chapter. Here, I am influenced by post-structuralist theory concerning the meeting of different cultures, an experience described as one that 'liberated the subject from notions of fixity and purity, departing from the functionalist models concerned with cultural exchange' (Papasteriadis 2000:169).

### *State administration*

Difficulties manifest, for my informants, in residing in the sheltered housing scheme and engaging in the formal procedures that the government intend. Issues arise because the formal engagement processes provide a challenge to their cultural and personal experiences. Contradiction and confusion intertwined within the structure as it struggled to respond to my informants' difficulties regarding engagement. Whereby some of my informants told me they felt watched by other residents and the workers, resulting from the style of service provision that paradoxically intended to supportively surround them, rather than suffocate them. It was often viewed as an invasion of privacy, that I suggest also contravened their liking of secrecy that is a feature of their cultural practice. Mr. Johns told me,

'the Scheme Managers know what's going on in here. They get to see and hear all about us.'

Indeed Mrs. Evans stated,

'The Scheme Manager has a key to enter my flat. I am concerned about this because she can come in my place without my permission.'

Mostly the help of the Scheme Managers was welcomed but my informants remained wary of them and their representation as state officials. They appear to be influenced by their knowledge that the state has power over them, power that they have experienced and feared. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jarvis expressed the comfort she felt knowing that they were available to help her if she had a problem. She told me of an occasion where she was assisted in an emergency, saying:

'I was feeling sick and dizzy so I raised the alarm in my flat. I fainted but the Scheme Manager was able to come in and help me, although I could not open the door to her. Afterwards she said she could see I was poorly from the other day so she was watching me.'

Organisations are governed by policies and this is evident at the sheltered housing scheme complex. Planned policies assist to organise, legitimate and motivate behaviour (Shore and Wright 1997). They are also embedded in the institutional mechanisms of decision-making and service delivery. Therefore, 'the examination of policy enables us not only to see social relations in action, but to also understand cultural systems' (Shore and Wright 1997:14). Through my informants' lived experience, it emerges how policy is used to order the environment and affect their social and personal lives and cultural systems. These connections are seen in relation to the ethnicity and culture of my informants whose lives in the scheme are governed by the BME strategy and related policies. However, in the scheme they are in conflict. The conflicts are mostly resolved or are smoothed over because policies are not operated to the letter, but functioned within and outside the rules. This mirrors similar rule bending that is highlighted as a feature of how organisations operate (Shore and Wright 1997).

Therefore, the BME strategy, Equal Opportunities and inclusion ethos are inoperable alone and are enforced through the professional workers, who uphold this system that governs the lives of my informants. Eisenstadt (1968) highlighted Weber's view that the individual and the institution are linked within social life and forged together in the process of social change, through looking

at how personal charisma affected the process of institution building (1968:ix). This is interesting because there is a definite connection between how the management structure interprets its role in providing the culturally specific service by placing the onus of application of the service provision on specific workers to ensure achievement. The workers' personal attributes and characters certainly affect the interface under my investigation and the success of the policies. Indeed, in the scheme, the Scheme Managers bear the burden of the service delivery issues, as do the Carers and other front line staff.

### *The support and care services*

State services integrated with other services in the community. The Metropolitan Housing Trust, social services, health services and private sector companies are all involved in the provision of services to the elderly at the sheltered housing scheme. The government initiatives that promote integrated care lay out the structure that governs the contractual relationships between the purchasers, providers and recipients of services.

Therefore, my elderly informants encounter many officials depending on the severity and complexity of their health care and well-being needs. For example, if they became unwell and temporarily entered hospital for treatment they are assessed by the hospital Social Worker to assess the issues they will face on return to their home in the scheme. On leaving hospital, they may need to have adaptations in their home such as the installation of grab rails or they may need to have meals delivered to them or prepared for them. They may also require a Carer to visit them and help them to bathe and dress, ensuring they take their medication, eat their meals and clean themselves and their flat. In addition, they may need to attend a Day Centre to limit their loneliness and to provide them with enjoyable meaningful social activities and interaction with other people. All these services are received following an assessment. This system based on myriad sets of policies and procedures is cumbersome. This process can become very confusing for my elderly informants but it is the responsibility of the Scheme Manager to provide support to them and guide them through the process. The table below, in Figure 22, represents the types of service provided

to my informants residing at the scheme. It shows the differentiation between the support services and locates the workers involved in my discussion in this chapter.

<b>Finance Source</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Professional worker</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Care</b>
Lambeth Supporting People Team (Ms. Bello)	Metropolitan Housing Trust	Sheltered Scheme Managers (Andrea/Brenda)  Area Housing Manager (Mr. Amidon)  Housing Officer  Handyman	✓	
Lambeth Social Services	Lambeth Social Work Teams	Duty Social Worker  Senior Social Worker (Ms. Bookman)  Social Work Manager Assessment Team  Panel members made up of a variety of medics		✓
NHS	Acute & Primary Care Trust	Psychiatric Nurse  Hospital Social Worker  District Nurse  Occupational Therapist		✓
Social Services Commissioner	Brokerage	Carers Procurement Team- Brokerage Manager Domiciliary Team		✓
Private Sector Business	Allied Care  Cleaning  Grocery delivery	Carer's Manager (Ms. Green)  Cleaner (Mrs. Kamara)  Local Grocer		✓
Voluntary Sector	Lambeth Council <sup>86</sup> Day Centres	Day Centre Managers	✓	

**Figure 22** *Support and care services*

<sup>86</sup> The Day Centre receives grants from the government to provide services.

I found the elders' interface with state services is problematic in terms of the intricacies of the structure as well as the overlaps that occur between the service providers. These issues are locked into wider concerns about the remit of services. Particularly when Mr. Amidon, the Area Housing Manager, says that the sheltered housing scheme is a service that 'is over resourced'. I thought that this was a curious description but he explained that in some instances the roles of the Scheme Manager overlap with the Housing Officer as they both have responsibilities to ensure that the building is maintained and the rent paid. Social services assess and review the assistance that they give to the residents, so too does the local authority and Metropolitan Housing Trust (MHT) Scheme Managers. The government has therefore created many services to ensure that elderly people, who vulnerable due to their age, are not left to suffer in life and to cope alone. Nevertheless, although the services are designed to work together and monitor each other, the overlapping service provisions further complicate these processes.

### *Management issues*

Critical theoretical responses to the social structure of society prove useful in this context because they provide a critique of the political practices regarding the order and control of society. Certainly cultures are fluid and identities can be uncertain and ambiguous, as proposed by Derrida (cited in Papastasteraidis 2000). This is due to the peculiarities that various cultures bring that may not be fully understood. So the heterogeneous elements within society create conflicts, tensions and contradictions (Papastasteraidis 2000). Thus the meeting points result in a crisis situation as Gramsci (cited in Boggs 1976) proposed and as I also uncovered in the meeting of my informants' ethnicity and cultural peculiarities within England and their interface with the state.

This meeting point Bhabha (1994) refers to as the 'in between place' (see pages 210 and 214, in chapter 6, for an explanation of Bhabha's concept). I find a parallel with this notion regarding the meeting of difference in my research and the effect this has on social change. For my informants share differences but there are points of similarity with the host inhabitants,

specifically regarding care and support, because the core of human personal needs transcend ethnic and cultural differences. Yet, the contradictions and conflicts arise during their exposure to service delivery.

The information I obtained from the Area Housing Manager highlights some of the problems that exist with the organisation and management of the support service at the scheme. Mr. Amidon indicated that some problems had arisen from the predecessor of his post and consequently he was drafted in to fill that role<sup>87</sup>. He is quizzical of his placement and suggests that he was drafted in because he is a black person, conveniently working within the organisation in another department managing residential care services, rather than being the most appropriate person to cover the vacancy. He was drafted in to manage this service in the housing support section that brought an association across service divisions that would otherwise not occur at this management level. This, he suggested, brought confusions and complications and compromised the authority of the Scheme Managers and his authority, as he told me,

'my role now involves me in a section I would otherwise not get involved with. So my position is confused, as I unnaturally now work in two sections as opposed to just one. I am also employed in the same division in a more senior position so covering the two posts creates a conflict of interest.'

He believed this situation occurred because the organisation was trying to deal with issues of management and side stepped the main issue of racism. Andrea (Scheme Manager) described the issue,

'We should have a manager from the Older Person's Team but our line manager came from the regional care side because a white manager could not manage me so without notification they gave us a black manager from the regional care section. (Referring to Mr. Amidon.) The way they gave him to us was totally unjust for they

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<sup>87</sup> A post not designated as needing a black employee to reflect the service users' race and cultural heritage, unlike the Scheme Manager post.

gave us a black manager thinking it would be better. Do I have regular supervision?, not really, and I am supposed to.'

The underlying denial of the role race played in staffing issues led to overlooking the effect of racism and the need to support the Scheme Managers. For the previous issues regarding the allegation of racism against the previous white manager led to a resolution whereby the manager was moved-on, however, the issues arising from the encounter never addressed. The scheme managers felt this problem was not taken seriously, or that the senior managers colluded, leaving issues uncontested. The Scheme Managers therefore assumed the nonchalant response was fuelled by institutional racism. They accused senior management of appointing a black manager seemingly knowing the difficulties that would arise in relation to overlooking protocol. Consequently, this scenario led to issues surfacing between the black staff.

However, Mr. Amidon suggested that he was used as a 'sticking plaster' to smooth over issues at the 'coal face' with the front line workers at the scheme to ensure service delivery to the residents. Nonetheless, it arises that this issue is twofold: first, drafted in to cover paradoxically because he is a black person, secondly to provide management support to staff. However, the former fact compromised the efficiency of the latter. He assessed his new remit saying,

'As a black person I am most suited to manage the scheme. Within the older persons' service structure there is a team manager that would manage the Scheme Manager and report to me. I am covering this vacancy at the moment. This brings me down to a role that compromises my position in terms of direct access. The Scheme Managers need someone to give on-going support but I am a strategic manager. They needed someone who has a similar background and identifies with the service, I have this ... my background as care manager is useful, I understand where these people are coming from. I am also black so in the eyes of MHT that will do.'



He airs his reservations about being placed into this position because this compromise also causes problems with managing the Scheme Managers and the implementation of the support service at the scheme. Indeed, my elderly informants became central to this staffing controversy.

Here, the issue of race is seen as problematic on two counts, first, the need to find appropriate staff to deliver the services; second, to find staff possessing the necessary skills to specifically manage black staff. In the present predicament, using Mr. Amidon because he is a black person caused dysfunction in the structure as it forced operation outside of the agreed standard procedures passed a healthy functional boundary. Thus, using Mr. Amidon to cover the post became confusing, because he also remained in his more senior position in another section which contradicted the lineal management structure in operation.

The resulting problems manifest in his attendance at meetings at the scheme with the Scheme Managers and residents<sup>88</sup>. He additionally commented that the elderly residents 'deal with me more directly', stating, 'in meetings they expect immediacy because I am there, and I have to ask them, have you approached the Scheme Manager?' The staffing gap exposed in public, often caused friction between him and the Scheme Managers in front of the residents. His presence at meetings wearing the hats of line manager and that of an operational strategic manager meant that issues went straight to the 'top', bypassing the Scheme Managers, so it was a confusing situation for the residents.

It is this position that he finds compromises his ability to function appropriately because Mr. Amidon reports to himself across departments, in effect he holds more power than the structure intends and he is therefore left to take individual action to rebalance this structural disparity. Regarding his predicament, he commented,

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<sup>88</sup> The strategic manager is not ordinarily so involved in the frontline supervision of staff. However in this position of providing cover Mr. Amidon is therefore closer to discussions and issues that his position would ordinarily allow.

'I think even the Scheme Managers do not understand this themselves, sometimes the residents think I am their Housing Officer and ask me to solve their problems, I refer them to the Housing Officer. People can manipulate the situation and try to bypass the appropriate worker. There is a working protocol to allow the scheme to manage appropriately and they must stick to it.'

This incongruity created issues and I observed a meeting riddled with bickering between staff in front of my informants. Mr. Amidon found this predicament affected teamwork because unfortunately he feared that they were 'not a team', but work with much 'frustration' between them with 'differences' surfacing. Nevertheless, they attempted to create better team co-ordination and organisation, through what Mr. Amidon refers to as 'on-going communication'.

An example of this disruption was highlighted in a meeting between staff and residents. Part of the management of the service involves regular meetings to discuss issues that arise in the scheme. Such meetings also provided a forum to discuss improvements to the service implemented by the management of the scheme.

I was present at a meeting held to discuss security. The discussion focused on the issues specifically concerning the entrance doors to the buildings, the keys to the locks in circulation and the installation of a visual door entry system (CCTV). There had been numerous complaints by the residents stating that the front door to the building was often left open or on the latch and that the lock was faulty. They feared that this contributed to non-residents entering the building and wandering around the garden, compromising their safety. The Area Manager said,

'... residents' feared other residents who came home drunk, because their friends leave the front door open'.

The Housing Officer responded,

'I am getting quotes to change the type of locking device used at the front door to provide more security.'

Brenda (one of the Scheme Managers) assured the group,

'only the resident with mental health issues, lets non residents who they do not know into the building. However, there is a concern that the residents were giving keys to their family and friends.'

The Housing Officer added,

'a homeless relative of a resident was found asleep in the ground floor toilet because someone allowed him in at night to sleep in the building.'

Throughout the meeting, hostility was present and the discussion appeared to be conducted amid frustration with obvious contention between staff. In his defence, believing he was attacked by one of the Scheme Managers, Mr. Amidon proclaimed,

'I am not here to be asked questions that were directed towards me from Andrea (Scheme Manager) regarding the type of entry system to be installed. This is what she is doing and I feel set up to agree on the spot'.

Andrea replied to him stating defiantly with a strong tone,

'I thought that you were making decisions without having consultations with the residents. This is because in a recent meeting the residents preferred a system that used an independent monitor that is placed next to their intercom buzzer in the flat rather than use their television as the monitor. Have you considered their wishes?'

Mr. Amidon replied,

'You are confusing the issue, I am your boss, not the other way around and you cannot make decisions for me. You have led tenants to believe that I could change the security system to one they wanted, but you should have known that this was not possible. Tunstall were contracted to undertake the job two years ago and the contract must be fulfilled and run its course. When the contract finishes, only at that point can another system be looked at and priced. The process must be decided within budget management and follow the correct process and procedures.'

In a discussion with me after the meeting the Area Manager said,

'Black women are the hardest to manage. I manage the scheme because there are allegations of racism towards the previous Area Manager. This is a Metropolitan BME scheme, the Housing Corporation has rules and regulations, but sometimes BME communities need to operate differently within this to cater for their needs. The BME group, who make the policies, must "bend" the rules so as to meet their culturally specific requirements. Even I have to, unfortunately the situation is made worse because the Scheme Managers undermine each other and have had to work out their relationship. The residents also have preferences with the Scheme Managers and this also adds to the confusion and conflict within the scheme.'

I surmise that the issues of management between the staff only serve to complicate the process for the residents. The role of the Scheme Manager involves the empowerment of the elderly people but such public displays of disagreement would surely only take away power from the residents influencing changes to their environment. The extracts also highlight the mistrust or confusion between the Scheme Manager and the Area Manager drawing in the elderly people in their management issues. This style of engagement with the elderly people causes confusion about all of the roles and inputs into the operation of the service. This perhaps also adds to the disillusionment, and lack

of drive to contribute by some residents, thereby removing them further away from engaging the service user involvement processes. As a result, therefore, they paradoxically remain outside of the powerful decision-making mechanisms regarding their service provision that ultimately creates a sense of anomie towards it resulting from this crisis.

Gramsci's (1990) theory of social change highlights that when crisis exists in society, weaknesses in the state governance arise. In my research, a crisis arose through the problems that occurred in meeting the ethos of the service provision. Therefore, in this case, the state comes into conflict with itself, the staff and my elderly informants as service recipients. Certainly, Bhabha's (1994) notions harbour conflict regarding the meeting of people of different cultures and backgrounds and I too found conflict in the meeting of my informants' culture with that of the indigenous within their interface with the state. This meeting creates problems that occur because of the differences between the state, workers and my informants. I also found differences that emanated from the internal conflicting dimension between black staff.

The comment above by the Area Manager concerning managing black staff members also adds to the confusion of the BME remit. It affected his work as a senior manager concerned with the provision of specialist services, appropriate staff, and management of them. His comment led me to ask him what his thoughts were on the scheme being a provision solely for black elderly people. He replied stating there was no point staying in a BME<sup>89</sup> scheme where they become vulnerable and threatened by isolation from the mainstream. This is because surrounding them with similar staff with similar colour and culture is not replicated in many other services that they engage with in the wider society. Therefore, Mr. Amidon held a paradoxical view concerning this BME structure, because he did not think that it was vital to have a scheme that catered specifically for the black elderly Afro Caribbean population. At the same time he also acknowledged the need to cater for such needs by stating that they must operate 'outside' of the rules to meet the needs of my black elderly West Indian

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<sup>89</sup> Black, minority, ethnic residents permitted only in a specialised service.

informants. This paradox is mirrored in the ambivalence found in the provision and management of the services that I found made my informants feel somewhat excluded, in addition to creating conflicting views amongst the staff. The exclusions are rather subtle, perhaps unintentional at times, but I suggest arise from poor planning on a national and local level that requires further development.

As a result, at the scheme they do recognise that their BME status is not specifically addressed within the mainstream policies that are used to govern the project, because one operational policy is applied nationally to all schemes regardless of ethnicity or culture. For example the tenancy agreement and the rights and obligations of the tenant are universal, the rules governing social gatherings are controlled under universal guidelines and this leads to local interpretation and manoeuvres to meet the cultural needs of my elderly informants. What appears to be going on is that workers become individually powerful in reshaping local practices but this brings a threat to working relations and adhering to the formal rules and teamwork, so the Scheme Managers have to continually monitor each other through their on-going communications. This process also affects my elderly informants who, as a result, are locked into confusion about what to expect concerning their cultural specificity. This affects their sense of engagement with the state and their sense of belonging for this situation makes them recognise their marginal status.

Mr. Amidon concluded that as a result of the difficulties in managing this specific BME sheltered housing scheme, the scheme is misplaced because it is 'not part of the care team, as such, and it is straddled between care and supported housing at MHT, so finds itself cast away'. It is consequently inevitable, to him, that this support service is, as he says, 'difficult to manage' due to the unresolved issues of racism and staffing within the organisation. He also acknowledged that the support service 'had a side affect on the Scheme Managers' who reside on site.

Another dimension to the problems emanates from the Scheme Manager's residency as he suggested, 'this type of set up', where the Scheme Managers

live on site, creates issues of too much localised availability resulting in the blurring of work times and times off duty. In response to this situation he concludes that,

'A community that has no responsibilities and obligations answers to itself but employees who live in it as an employee is on duty. The crossovers caused problems and I am mindful of them'.

Therefore, Mr. Amidon suggested that they worked, in an outdated staffing structure that caused operational problems. However, he was not empowered to change working conditions alone because this was a union issue. Such issues outside of localised control served to fuel the difficulties and threaten the stability of the scheme adding to the aforementioned problems. This serves to put the BME issues into a wider context because in reality multiple issues affect the operation of the scheme. So issues at the scheme compound due to associations with structural issues that transcend ethnicity and culture but impinge on the localised problems. In relation to my informants, there were also operational problems. Mr. Amidon believed that some of my informants did not fit into the service remit because their issues had grown too complex and perhaps needed more help than could be obtained at the flat, in the scheme. Though many were comfortable there and did not request a move to another place, for other places did not specialise as a BME only scheme, or they did not want to move at all. Nevertheless, residency reflected the concerns regarding ethnicity and other complex personal and cultural issues residents fear may not be addressed elsewhere.

Mr. Amidon said that 'residents were not that keen to help the more disabled among them'. (However, I found instances of help from those more able towards the more needy elders.) Nonetheless, due to his perception of a lack of mutual localised help, Mr. Amidon asked,

'Can we support a resident to maintain their tenancy within this environment if they are very confused? That's why there are confused people in the scheme but they still want to live here. If the

tenant is confused, it is difficult to appreciate their circumstances and make the right decision. This is a real dilemma and one faced by the Scheme Managers’.

Mr. Amidon continued,

‘Sometimes the residents see the official in a supporting role as interfering and this can cause friction between them and the support worker. The close proximity within which they operate causes issues so these structures are currently being reviewed. You have no option, unless you want to lose your service, but to review your service. This is as much a vital part of the process as staff undertaking tasks such as training and building inspections, support plans devised and reviewed and residents involved in their review processes’.

It is therefore apparent that management issues at the scheme are complex and wide ranging. They are multiple and interrelated and bring out the discord that exists internally in the state structures, the state’s response to staffing issues concerning ethnicity as well as internal dynamics at play between black staff and their ambivalence towards this specialised BME scheme. Consequently, my elderly informants experience marginalisation both with their interface with the state and internally within their BME community.

#### *Consultation or conflict?*

Gramsci (1990), a figure of revolutionary left politics in Italy, focused on a strategy to effect social change that would overthrow the ruling oppressive state that is useful at this point of analysis. Gramsci (cited in Boggs 1976) sought a process to give the southern peasantry an orientation of its own, by taking action against the pervasive hegemonic system that excluded them from power and suppressed them, suggesting changes would come from challenges occurring through the cultural processes taking place in everyday life.



Importantly, Gramsci thought that 'the political consciousness defining any movement is shaped by the gradual and diffuse flow of ideas and life-experiences, involving an organic fusion of the "personal" and "cultural" realms within the political' (Boggs 1976:59). For Gramsci suggested that first the intellectuals then the masses would combine 'converting the structure of repression into one of rebellion and social reconstruction' (Boggs 1976:59). Gramsci found that the ruling ideological framework or hegemony rested on shaky foundations but retained power through the unity of Catholicism. Nevertheless, divisions amongst various city-states and clergy existed, so civil society lacked cohesion and this led to factions and cliques within the society that weakened it. Similarly I find although the unifying equal opportunities, inclusion and BME strategies provided the avenue for unity there were factions within that weakened the strength of the oppressed, and maintained state power.

Further, Gramsci's (cited in Boggs 1976) notions suggest this situation presents a crisis in the society and likely to lead to unrest. I see parallels within the state response to the issues regarding diverse ethnicities and cultures in England that has resulted in shaky systems that are open to attack, for the society appears uncertain about these differences. Though not intellectuals, the Managers in my research are state administrators and ordinary individuals. They both oppose the notions of the ruling hegemony and promote it, thereby creating a clash within the state system that threatens it. So through the clashes and alliances that develop and unfold in this chapter, state boundaries are pushed and weakened as my informants and workers assert powerful agency that affects their social relations, while undermining and threatening state control, and paradoxically also informing it.

The official mechanisms of consultation prescribed by the state provide arenas where the clashes and differences surface. Attempts to minimise marginalisation through inclusion and involvement of clients in the planning process involves engaging them in service reviews. In this setting such reviews are part of the Supporting People contract and funding rules, for these rules ensured an engagement between the state and service users. However, such

reviews though designed to foster inclusion, proved problematic and exclusory. Representatives of the Supporting People team, who manage the contract, undertook the reviews and monitored the service by conducting user surveys that provided my informants with an avenue to exert their power and influence on policy, service development and improvement. The consultations also provided a forum through which residents could make concerns known. A consultation meeting took place at the scheme within the prescribed format and involved the use of a set of formal questions about the service. I observed difficulties encountered in undertaking this formal process. The service user consultation took place within the coffee morning gathering.

The residents entered the lounge and gathered their 'goodies' from the usual display available at their coffee mornings. The coffee morning assumed the usual format except the disc jockey was not playing music<sup>90</sup>, it was quiet and I joined fellow residents in the meeting. Taking a seat in preparation for the meeting, Ms. Bello began,

'It is my job to find out about your views, as customers, concerning the support service that you receive. I want to hear about the good points and things that you think need to be changed.'

At first the elderly people were not paying attention and subtly continued to eat and to replenish their plates with food ignoring her address. Some of the residents and Andrea, one of the Scheme Managers, talked together within the meeting that obviously disrupted it. A contractor came to the lounge and Andrea also had a conversation with him that was audible to all of us. Ms. Bello realised that some people were not paying attention so she made an announcement asking everyone to eat first then the meeting would be held at a time when full attention could be given to it. This type of disruption was a common feature of such meetings. The attempt to follow the formal procedure was always adjusted, but through this somewhat awkward fashion. As usual

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<sup>90</sup> The coffee morning is described in chapter 6.

those who spoke were mainly the more vocal and assertive members and those usually quiet remained so. On this note the Area Manager commented,

'... some views only represented a minority of the scheme inhabitants' concerns'.

However, these views are the ones heard and most likely to be considered. No one spoke on behalf of the shy or quiet. The responsibility for this marginalised group seemed missing and fuelled the issues that I found. Eventually, Ms. Bello said that she would conduct individual meetings with interested residents. She advised them as follows.

'There are other forums in the community you can go to and address your concerns and I encourage you to attend them. There is the Older Persons Forum held in the Town Hall. So you must voice your concerns and not feel that you are causing trouble or want to stir things up, because as a group you need to make your voice heard because he who shouts loudest gets heard. Some issues are the same all over because the government makes cuts here and there and the government assumes things are ok when they are not. It is not always about race.'

The Area Manager also informed them,

'You can also ask a local Councillor to visit the scheme to hear your concerns and views.'

Ms. Bello then said,

'I am speaking to you as a black woman so please make your voice heard and speak up.'

However, one resident replied,

'We tenants sometimes think that we don't get things lookable<sup>91</sup> because we are black, every year rent goes up, get nothing else. Now paying 'x' amount of rent for 'x' amount of nothing'.

To which Ms. Bello replied,

'I hear you feel your concerns are not being heard.'

Ms. Bello then asserted, a reaffirmation of her employer's rules,

'Lambeth view this as a unique scheme and would like it to continue as it is, you are part of this special scheme. Your concerns are noted and things would be put in place. So you need to continually bring things up as a group and also go to the tenants meetings every three months. I will consider anything raised there.'

I concluded that the meeting was difficult for Ms. Bello to undertake and keep charge within. Mostly, the residents sat looking disinterested, being quiet and thereby disengaged. Their disengagement appeared to contribute to the difficulties in addressing them and inhibited hearing their views that remained silent. Conversely, I also think they were not that concerned with her topics, underpinned by their lack of faith in their voice being heard. Other impediments include their true disinterest in co-operating as well as being too shy or feeling unable to voice their opinions. Whilst the actions of the 'disruptive' Scheme Manager portrayed her apathy and disengagement with such processes highlighting the difference in approach between the two Scheme Managers. Such difference and expressed discord regarding the approaches of staff towards the engagement of my informants serve to further highlight the internal staff differences making unity difficult, and jeopardising consultation and consequently the involvement of my informants in the decision making process.

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<sup>91</sup> Using the term 'lookable', my informant suggests the council does not ensure that the improvements to the physical fabric of the scheme are sufficient to allow the residents to look respectable and be respected.

However, Ms. Bello's comment to the group stating, 'I had a lot of questions to ask but decided to focus on the health and safety section of the form for now', seems to lean towards a difficulty in undertaking the full course of consultation. I wondered if this process would be completed or become too difficult to end and remain as partial consultation, keeping my informants partially included, a scenario that often occurred. This is not due to her lack of communication skill but more due to the formal process and the jargon filled language that is unfamiliar to my informants, fuelling their apathy.

The elderly residents did exercise some input into the decision making process about the enhancements to be made to the security measures and services they received. Nonetheless, their input was compromised through the staff conflicts and managerial issues that consequently silenced the less confident members. Nevertheless, issues of racism are present to the effect that the elderly people believe they are being treated less equally because they are black.

#### *Ethnicity, culture and staffing*

Differences between staff further illuminated the crisis situation and the resulting conflicts unfold in the following sections where I discuss the involvement of the Scheme Managers in their wider work place network, managerial support, the differences between the workers regarding the BME designation at the scheme and the state's response to my informants' ethnicity. Through investigating their involvement with the personal care services supplied, I find further compromises to the notion of inclusion whilst contesting power relations through the conflicts that ensue.

It is clear that the Scheme Managers, as front line workers, are the closest to the residents. Therefore, I interviewed both the Scheme Managers, Brenda and Andrea, to ascertain the difficulties that they encountered at this BME scheme. My task here was to ascertain their perspectives regarding BME and the co-ordination of their tasks with their colleagues.

Both Scheme Managers told me that 'being black and of West Indian origin was specified in the advert' when they applied for the post, to respond to the provision for African and West Indian black elderly people in order to provide for and understand their cultural and ethnic needs. (There was only one African elderly woman resident who moved out in the early part of my research. The origin of the scheme focus continues to be West Indian).

I asked them about the management support received enabled them to provide this culturally specific service. Their responses served to further highlight the existing problems. First, Brenda explained how she felt when she attended meetings with other Scheme Managers below.

'Other Scheme Managers need more training to embrace diversity. I feel that a lot of them are under this old thinking, of well we are not really different we are all the same. If a Scheme Manager is talking about something that is culturally specific then it is as though the rest of the team are not all that interested or they give the impression that you are just moaning on, or thinking why can't you just do this or that and not complain. The lack of understanding of the cultural things by others does make the job harder than it is and the job is hard enough.'

I asked them if they received support from their manager or peers in the department. Andrea replied,

'the real truth is we do not have support'.

It became clear that organisational issues regarding staffing and management within the BME context affected the bureaucratic process. I suggest this is because the professionalism concerning service delivery was compromised due to the managerial issues concerning their ethnicity. Nevertheless there are some positive points.

Brenda added,

'Before Mr. Amidon, we had 1:1 supervision with our line manager which was OK, but not OK in terms of addressing the culturally specific problems. I felt that at that time the particular line manager did not really have a good grasp of it, or didn't acknowledge it for whatever reason and didn't deal with certain things. The person had a poor understanding of the culturally specific problems. When Mr. Amidon came I was able to communicate with him a lot more and I feel that he supports me as much as he is able to but he is not the whole of MHT and he is not an island.'

I asked the two Scheme Managers if they relied on ensuring they supported each other, Andrea replied,

'Yes. We tend to use our coffee mornings for catching up with each other We used to meet regularly to talk about what's going on but we know about what's going on with each other. It's all written down or we phone each other.'

Not having significant senior management support and limited time to support each other, they also felt challenged by the recent changes to the working practice. New administrative systems prove burdensome under the recent changes in the funding framework that brought new accountability mechanisms. These provide an added layer to the difficult situation. Adjustment to it proved difficult because it challenged their perspectives in relation to working in the scheme. Brenda described her feelings,

'I feel that I have been consumed with paperwork and that social aspect of my job, which was the reason that I wanted to do this job in the first place, has totally been put aside.'

I hold my hand up to Metropolitan, there are lots of courses on offer. We have to do the first aid, manual handling, elder abuse, record keeping, support planning and administration etc. There is a lot of impact from the changes brought by supporting people, the new

funding structure that increased administration tasks that are time consuming. We are continually sent a draft of this and that and we have to find the time to meet with the clients and explain the form in a way that they would understand. Plus residents do not understand the jargon, because they are West Indian and older and the cultural thing but they are clear about the service they should get judged by what they need in a practical sense. Although a lot of the tenants have been here a long time they are still very Jamaican in how they talk, perceive and understand things. I have really got to break it down and go beyond a plain kind of English to make them understand. Not sure how much of this is understood by our management as well as the enormous amount of time that it takes to process the enormous amounts of paperwork that arrives daily.'

It appears that being able to mediate between the state processes and the elderly residents requires a high level of interpersonal skills and personal judgement because it includes understanding the cultural nuances of the West Indian (predominantly Jamaican) elderly people. Although the Scheme Manager knew about the difficulties she would encounter, she responded to them only when difficulties arose. This crisis intervention approach may also indicate something about the administrative processes and management of them, as the revealing issues became 'the issue' and the problematic policies and structures guiding the service provision remained. This is highlighted within the following statement from Andrea.

'Where the state provisions, regulations and culture merge it is difficult, for example, one tenant at the moment has got needs that make her vulnerable and qualify her to come into the scheme, but having said that she is also perfectly able to supervise the grandchildren that are coming to visit her. This practice is commonplace in our culture. But they cannot stay with her for long periods due to policy.'



To get any change I suppose you would have to make representations to the Housing Corporation, I don't make the rules. You would have to be represented in your numbers. What you need is a balance because if we are really saying that we want people to live normal lives, domestic lives with support in their own flat then you have to look at the thing holistically not just in terms of health and safety rules and laws. It's part of it but you need a balance somewhere. The BME aspect still needs to be developed because there is a difference between the structure and human need.'

This statement highlights the complexity of the difficulty that working cross-culturally brings to the managers. The BME designation is therefore paradoxical because the culture of cultural diversity is intertwined with the desire to acknowledge difference on one side, and the inability to address it on the other. This situation was not reconciled, placing my elderly recipients uneasily between the two positions getting caught up in the incongruities. Therefore the position of my elderly informants is consequently inconclusive regarding inclusion into mainstream society. Similarly, Andrea highlights other issues with the BME service by stating,

'We have got a Housing Officer that doesn't see the need for the scheme to be a black scheme. We got certain Scheme Managers that haven't actually voiced it but it is the same thing. A lot of people don't feel the need for it, I don't think MHT see the need for it either. There will always be a need for black sheltered housing, there will always be a need because black elders are living longer and black elders have the same needs as white elders, so need help. If a black person wants to go into mixed sheltered housing, fair enough but if they want the choice of going somewhere where it is there own culture, so be it.'

When I asked, how do you try to cater for their cultural difference given the ambivalence towards this by fellow workers? Brenda answered, saying that

sometimes, they take the initiative and let the residents dictate their needs. She explained,

'When I first came it was, 'whatever you say dear' and it was quite difficult to get them out of that. They would also say, "you are the Warden,<sup>92</sup> you make all the decisions". Now we are at a really good stage where tenants are planning and organising things off their own back but still having respect by coming to us and saying, "we are going to plan a barbecue and we would like to do the cooking can you print invitations for me." My attitude is that, I will try to encourage the tenants to socialise but I will not force them. People ask, "what do they do?". Students have said, "it is quiet today" and I say they are living their lives doing what it is they want to do.

If we say coffee morning is available, I don't feel that I have to be continuously pushing people to join in if they are very private and choose to not join. I'd rather that they were doing their own thing even if it meant them being solitary rather than feel that they are coming but don't really want to be here. '

I asked her whether my informants' cultural differences affected the formal structural processes? Brenda replied,

'Yes, because although the provisions do not always match their needs they adjust them to accommodate their needs.'

### *Ambivalence towards ethnic difference and ambiguous service demarcations*

As stated above the not all of the staff were in agreement with the scheme being a specialist BME service provision. In reality, the services applied were not any different to mainstream services but adapted by residents and staff to suit their needs. The Scheme Managers allowed them to do so in recognition of

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<sup>92</sup> The title of the job changed from Warden to Scheme Manager.

their difference to the mainstream elderly, so navigate the procedures similarly. I suggest that this is what the BME designation in this context expects, that is why the two Scheme Managers and the residents' race and cultural heritage are complementary in order to understand the differences and address them. A problem arises in this line of thought because there are legal sanctions to rule breaking, and as part of the adjustments, rules are manipulated but I am sure this was not intended. I therefore surmise that the BME designation is partially employed and stops at the level of resident occupation and complementary staffing and the rest requires further development. Therefore, in reality my informants remain in a structurally subsidiary position within British society.

Another feature of this elderly group is that some of the residents are illiterate. A temporary Housing Officer, Ms. June, a black woman of West Indian origin highlighted this, stating that amongst these elderly people, 'many residents have difficulty with reading and writing and this makes it additionally difficult for them to engage in the high level of bureaucracy that the service generates'. These difficulties also highlight the class bias or education level bias in the state systems that exclude such people. This adds to the cultural differences that create a distance between the elderly people and the state. The government instigates many initiatives to engage different departments who provide complementary services to work together under the notion of joined-up working. In reality, the services often appear to work independently and sometimes against each other rather than work together in this instance. They collide with each other and bring the elderly people along through the endurance of an uncomfortable ride.

In the role of an enabler, the Scheme Managers are the go-between for the care services and the elderly residents, and it is their role to help to resolve issues. Their job also involves providing general advice to the residents and signposting them to other organisations in the community who can advocate on their behalf and advise them on any problems that arise. The Scheme Managers also referred them to organisations such as Age Concern and the Citizens Advice Bureau to assist them with legal advice. The support provided by the Scheme Manager is placed in the role as monitor for the resident, for

they are the first state officials whom my elderly informants call for immediate assistance. Therefore, part of their responsibility is to construct a support plan with my informants to help them overcome their difficulties as described by Brenda who explained,

'... we talk with the client regarding what they think their support needs are and what I the Scheme Manager feel their support needs are. With this we carry out a risk assessment to minimise harmful risks to them.

I simplify the language on the forms and ask them how they feel about the Carer, the service that they are getting, asking do you think you need extra support? Sometimes the client doesn't understand the differentiation between support and care<sup>93</sup>. I ask them about their health and well-being, is their eyesight failing, if they are slowing down, do they need help to move around the flat. I explain things. If the support needs have changed from my daily calls them I would make a referral back to social services saying that this client needs an increase in their care package. The social services will reassess the case. They also have access to a local Housing Officer to sort out their rent payments, the legal jargon and related policy.'

In addition to structural issues providing a barrier to inclusion, the differences between workers further threatened their BME status as a unifier to the creation of a sense of belonging. Another important factor emerges out of this point regarding the language barrier and the joint-working relationship between the Scheme Manager and the Housing Officer. Two issues arise, first the scheme manager is ambivalent towards their language difficulties and this appears incongruent because he shares their same ethnic and cultural heritage background. Moreover, his post does not require the post holder to be of a similar background to the service recipients, but is guided by the general BME

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<sup>93</sup> Support work identifies and co-ordinates their support needs. Care refers to the actual hands on provision of the domiciliary care service.

ethos. However, his personal views surface as paradoxically oppositional to their language difficulties.

Therefore, the recent Housing Officer encountered difficulties in communicating with the elderly residents or agreeing with the concept of a BME scheme. Mr. Clark is a black man whose parents came to England from Jamaica but this heritage was not a determinant for the post because the Housing Officer role is generic and not culturally specific. He manages this scheme among other properties outside of the scheme for the housing association. His tasks are about housing management and relate to maintenance of the building, tenancy management and ensuring the rent is paid but it does not include the provision of support in other areas of their lives. However, this role also coincides with the Scheme Manger's remit to ensure the building is in adequate repair and monitor rent arrears. His role involves communicating with the elderly residents as matters arise. However, he says that communication sometimes proved difficult because,

'... some find it hard to understand English, they speak in patois. Sometimes they rely on the Scheme Manager to explain information because *she* uses a language *they understand*. Although some of the residents have been in England since they were 10.

Also, white people live in Jamaica so why do they need to live apart from the rest of the community? There should be a scheme where we house people who have a housing need. We can cater for everybody within one scheme. We can share and take on other cultures to grow – no specific culture can survive on it's own. This specific black scheme is isolated from others, so if culture is important to you, you should share it.'

In summation, three issues appear. First, the issue that mainstream policies and procedures are applied to this BME specialist service with dubious effect towards ensuring inclusion. Secondly, there is a split between workers, as some workers straddle between the local needs and their application of

mainstream policy. The Housing Officer would not readily adapt to the elderly regarding their difficulties and differences, but expected the elderly people to conform to mainstream modes of expression. Meanwhile other workers, specifically the Scheme Managers, disagree and allow my elderly informants to adapt communication to suit their needs. Thirdly, the different approaches put the workers on opposite sides in relation to these issues and contribute to the diversity and incongruities within the BME strategy. This situation thereby limited the development of a sound basis for inclusion into mainstream British society for my informants, but fixed them in a subaltern position.

*Personal care and cultural differences*

In addition to the above conflicts in the designation of the BME status at the scheme and the different views regarding it, I found conflicts also occurring within the delivery of the personal care services similar to that which Gramsci (cited in Boggs 1976) highlighted with reference to state control. Particularly concerning the state’s administration processes that are eventually challenged as an act of resistance to the power and control it exerts (Gramsci 1990).

Figure 23 below shows residents who were in receipt of help from Social Services.

Client	Meal deliver	Meal prepara Carer	Carer
Mr. Melvin		✓	✓
Mr. Bailey	✓		
Mr. Earles	✓		✓
Mr. Griffiths		✓	✓
Mr. Truman	✓		✓
Mrs. Chambers			✓
Mrs. Jarvis		✓	✓
Muriel Johnson			✓
Mrs. Baker (a)			✓
Ms. Duncan		✓	✓
Mrs. Jarvis		✓	✓

**Figure 23**      *Recipients of the services from social services*

It transpires that both men and women receive the services of a Carer because they have significant health and mobility issues, with one man and one woman

being housebound. One quarter of the men received the meal delivery service because they were unable to prepare their meals due to their low level cooking skills. Women who suffered ill-health or had mobility issues also received help from their Carer to assist them prepare a meal twice a day, this being mostly breakfast and their evening meal. Interestingly, seventy five per cent received the services of a Carer, in conjunction with caring received from their family.

The issue of culture as well as ethnicity also emerged from within these service provisions. The Brokerage department within social services purchase domiciliary care on behalf of the department from the private sector<sup>94</sup>. As a result the Brokerage department have an administering role to facilitate the execution of the care package requested by Social Services. Although they do not provide the Carers themselves they do discuss complaints and difficult cases with Allied Care, the care provider. The Brokerage Manager, Ms. Jones informed me that,

'We try to ensure a match of the appropriate Carer to the client, however this matching is driven by workforce ability and the practicalities of work, such as staff availability and travelling time. Alternatives may be allocated because we can train white staff to work with clients who have a different ethnicity to their own. But the new Carer job applicants are African – some West Indians do not want African Carers but white and Afro-Caribbean Carers are declining, so African Carers are often allocated to West Indians.'

The Brokerage department also monitor the contract of Care provision against the terms of the contract and resolve problems that arise. If unresolved by the Allied Care Manager. The Allied Care Manager, Ms. Green, highlights some of the issues encountered between the Carers and the West Indian black clients and African Carers.

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<sup>94</sup> The integrated service diagram is in chapter 3.

'You have to talk to those on both sides to address the problems, under the contract and under equal opportunities<sup>95</sup> and hear both sides of the story. Sometimes the client just does not like the person because they do not fit into their little world. I talk to one then the other and see who is dissatisfied. If the Carer is feeling that they are not doing the best for their client they will not want to go in, there will be absenteeism and I do not want this to occur. I do consider the needs of the client and ask them to show the Carer how to cook their way. You get some clients who are manipulative so I may reassess a situation after two weeks.

We do consider all their cultural needs. In terms of Afro-Caribbeans, some elders may want their hair braiding, some Carers can do it some can't. If it is just stated there is a requirement to comb their hair in the care package this will be done, if the Carer can also braid, then they will get their hair braided. There may be issues around food where some people like fried chicken and rice, some of us are very good at cooking rice and some of us are not. We will try to change the Care Worker to one who can perform the required tasks. We can't always offer it but we try as much as we can.

If Care Workers have been in care work for a number of years they have learnt to cook in different styles. Nevertheless, there are other Care Workers who have not made the venture into different cultural ways of cooking food.'

I assume from this outline that some Afro-Caribbean elders may not get their needs met. Further, their needs might be partially met depending on the skills of the Carer. It may also be the case that some elders are too fussy or perhaps a problem still remains regarding successfully meeting their needs. Indeed, something is missing when a real need is unmet and a problem arises where

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<sup>95</sup> This is referring to the notion of equality within the BME strategy, where services should respond appropriately to the needs of the client reflecting their age, cultural needs, race etc. See Lambeth's Equal Opportunity Strategy in Appendix D.



the cultural needs are not understood and acted upon. Nevertheless, although black Carers were allocated to my informants questions were still raised, as Andrea explained,

'... Carers come from an agency and for some reason it looks like a lot of black people do care work. However, people do not realise that black people of a different nationality have different needs and handle things differently. So they think they are doing the right thing by sending people from a different country to come and do something for a client here when that person, their food, their style of cooking is totally different. There are problems on that side of it but recently it's working out better. I've been here nearly 8 years and I have only ever seen two white Carers'.

Although the Carers are black like my elderly informants, some do not share the same culture, so in some instances dissatisfaction crept in towards the service that they received. The comments from my informants indicate some of the issues that arise. Mr. Melvin's view about his Carer is mixed, he comments,

'... she is an African woman and because African people are not one hundred per cent like Jamaicans, "dem work dem brain to leave things part-way"<sup>96</sup>. She will clean some of the plates and leave some dirty in the sink'.

He did not complain but he was glad to be relieved of her when she was changed from his case. He remarked that,

'... she was replaced by another African woman but she is better because she is British born.'

In summation, the Allied Care Manager's view regarding Afro-Caribbean people implied that the cultural differences can be overcome where the cultural difference is minimised, either by being of a similar background or training the

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<sup>96</sup> They will be cunning and only do a part of the task.

Carer. Ms. Bookman, the Social Services Manager, asserts that although there is flexibility in reference to the service designed to suit the individual needs of the elderly recipient, problems still arise. She commented on a shopping service, stating,

'the resident does have some choice because if they do not like the service provided they can request to have it stopped or alternatively not take the service that is available in the first instance. For example the home shopping service is undertaken by the PJ shopping service and they obtain the goods from Tesco for their clients. If the elderly person does not want shopping from Tesco they will not make use of this service. There is also the issue of poor services received from the service providers where the service request may not be provided, or they treat the older people as children. Sometimes there is bad time keeping and instances of staff being rude. They may use gloves to provide personal care that is perceived as offensive or not spend the time allocated with the client. However the Carers are not always trained and are working for a pittance. Nevertheless, the old people do not challenge much because they fear they may lose the service or receive reprisal treatment from the Carer.'

Nonetheless, a minority of my informants did speak up. One elderly respondent, Ms. Duncan, complained of her Carer to others, as she did to me, when she stated,

'The Carers do attend to me but they ruin my clothes when they wash them. They do not even do all that they should do. They ruined my hair so I had to cut it off.'

Whilst others suffer in silence, my field notes below concerning Mr. Truman describes a typical scenario of quiet dissatisfaction.

Mr Truman will go out and do his own shopping, he also does his laundry and sometimes the scheme cleaner will clean his flat. He does not cook so he is a

recipient of the social services food distribution process. The Carer brings him frozen food as part of the meals service and the food consists of West Indian, particularly Jamaican, foodstuffs. He receives meals such as chicken and rice, saltfish and other ingredients such as calaloo, yam, sweet potato, green banana. Mr. Truman stocks these in his freezer to be used at his convenience when he warms them up in the microwave that he was given. Yet, he told me that he does not like the frozen food. Alternatively, Mr. Truman buys food from the West Indian take away shop in Coldharbour Lane some evenings of the week and sometimes a neighbour will give him a meal.

Brenda explained that the formal processes of food distribution to people who live in sheltered housing schemes are standardised. If it is apparent to social services that an elderly person needs help in preparing meals then a meal delivery service will be provided to them. As described above this service consists of precooked frozen dinners. Alternatively the Carer may prepare a meal for them in their home. Indeed this client group consisting of people from the West Indies create a specific relevance to the type of meals presented to the elderly residents. Consequently, the meals are designed to be culturally specific and are reflected on the menu. Therefore, as far as the social services are concerned they have adequately met the needs of this client group through the provision of specific dishes. However, Brenda adds that the elderly residents were not satisfied with the meals and rejected them shortly after receiving such meals. Brenda commented,

'I think for our scheme they should just contact a local Caribbean restaurant that has a good chef with a good knowledge of preparing diabetic foods and such like. They don't want the Caribbean meals on wheels, they say it is rubbish.'

Another local system of food distribution met the shopping requirements of this group, but was not part of any official service provision. It was created by a local Afro-Caribbean grocer trading in Brixton market, in collaboration with the residents. She explained how her service worked,

'I have a few clients in the scheme; mostly those who find walking a strain, but are able to cook for themselves, such as Mrs. Jarvis. I take a shopping list from them and I bring their items the following week. I help them to make the list sometimes by looking in their fridge, as they allow me to check if they really need some of the items desired. I especially make sure they do not order perishable items unnecessarily such as mangoes and carrot juice until their stocks are depleted. I take a caring approach, I am not just here to make money out of them because I like to look after them as well.'

It transpired that the Care services do not fully meet the needs of my informants and other caring provisions and relations supplemented their provisions. I also found that the local state policy concerning food distribution did not include a significant variety of appropriate West Indian fresh food suppliers in their contracts. As a result, I found localised informal relations in operation, consequently I suggest service provisions require revising.

#### *Culture or personality differences?*

It was also evident that the resulting issues or crisis situations can be overcome on an individual basis rather than structurally, as individuals continued to affect changes in their everyday life (Gramsci 1990).

Looking closely at the liaison between my informants and their engagement with African helpers, I found that although there are differences between some of my elderly informants and their African supporters there were also circumstances where the difficulties were overcome. Mrs. Kamara, the cleaner of the common areas (and parts of some flats once a week on request) at the scheme, is from Sierra Leone and is therefore African. Nonetheless, she fits well into the scheme because she understands the personalities of the residents she has been working with for four years. She therefore commented,

'I respect them as elderly people and I try my best to help them, if they ask me nicely and appreciate me, I do things for them that are over the responsibilities of my job.'

In fact, they do ask favours of Mrs. Kamara who has built up a trustworthy relationship with them. For example they asked her to buy them a drink or a bag of sugar and other such small items they needed. Or they may ask her to put an item of clothing such as a jacket into the washing machine or to launder a bedspread for them in the laundry located in the scheme. In relation to Mr. Griffiths's flat she remarks, 'you do it and you do more'. She recognises that he is incapable of undertaking the required cleaning of his home so therefore gave him extra assistance that she says she gives from the 'goodness of her heart'.

Mrs. Kamara is a Christian and so says she tries to help those who are in need because she does not like to see them 'suffer'. She therefore advocates on their behalf by acknowledging their needs. Consequently when a Carer neglected cleaning their home that required cleaning, she often complained about this to the Scheme Manager on their behalf. She says that she does not like to see the elderly people in unnecessary hardship, proclaiming, 'I am a human being, I do feel for other people'.

Similarly the handyman is also employed by Metropolitan and provides a handyman service to the sheltered housing schemes. His job is to ensure that the grounds to the front and rear of the buildings are kept clean, to change light bulbs outside the building as well as in the communal areas and to check the washing machines and other domestic appliances. He also carries out repairs if a client needs a minor repair that does not warrant calling out a contractor. The handyman is also African, from Nigeria but he too finds it easy to work with the client group. He says,

'I try to help them as much as possible because they are old. I can understand that they are challenging at times but that is part of the experience of becoming old and feeling ill. As well as getting

frustrated that they cannot do some of the tasks they used to be able to do.'

From my observations at the scheme I conclude that he was able to communicate with my informants easily so developed a relationship with them based on his personality and the familiarity he developed with them. Through this familiarity they were confident to approach him because I also saw them engage in social conversations with him as he undertook his duties. This 'personal touch' and the similar relations developed between them and Mrs. Kamara, the cleaner, helped to reduce the institutionalised feel within service provision to the elderly residents and contributed to transcending cultural differences.

As I have previously suggested, some of the elderly people are themselves prejudiced against African Carers. Yet, they can develop a good rapport with African workers, indeed, the hitherto comments related to cultural differences. However, since the cleaner and a handyman perform functions that do not engage in any cultural specificity the differences appear to be more easily overcome. So perhaps the seeming prejudice contains embedded critical analysis of a culture clash that surfaces in some areas more obviously than others. This shows that the elderly experience conflict and incongruence when interfacing with other migrant groups and other black groups that also draws attention to their cultural insularity, difference and some prejudice towards others.

In summation, the institutional feel at the scheme is ever present because of the heavy state regulations that govern the operation of services that they receive. Although there are policies in place to cater for their specific needs, some workers disagree with them, so operate them without conviction. This also creates the indifference by some workers towards the notion of a separate service that is ethnically and culturally specific within the BME remit. I suggest this caused a 'volatile friction' between state policy and the elderly client group, as the authorities are ambivalent towards meeting the needs of their clients because they are West Indian and black. Whilst other workers embrace the

notion cultural specificity, therefore, what I call, 'disunity' amongst the workers arose. This is in opposition to the notion of joint working and co-ordination of service delivery under the banner of BME sensitivity, where all the services contribute to the well-being of the individual due to the inter-connected services provision. In a subtle way, the actual operations undermined overall service delivery and put more stress on certain parts of the structure as elders gravitate towards those who they feel strive to meet their particular needs and understand, to the exclusion of others. Thereby, the professionals and consequently the services they provide are filled with complexity and conflict. Surprisingly, this is not an area that is addressed significantly, as what is addressed is the outcome of the overlapping services that are confusing as a result of the unchallenged underlying issues, rather than the central important issues concerning ethnicity and cultural specificity, as suggested in chapter 3. For the state seemed to conflate the issues regarding colour and culture. This leads to the opposite effect and the creation of elder disengagement from services or disgruntlements arising rather than greater inclusion. Although some residents are satisfied with the personal care services at the scheme, others are not, so this creates differing views between them and adds to their differences identified in chapters 3 and 6.

Resulting from this confusion, I suggest, they become 'oppositional' to the BME designation, although the state drives towards unity and inclusion regarding the diverse service recipients. Therefore, I found my elderly informants mainly ambivalent regarding consultations so became confused, and mostly disengaged from these processes. However, they remain regulated by the power of the state through the policies and rules they must adhere to rather than agreeing with them, although at times rules were manipulated. The elderly people did not always engage meaningfully to change them, as a group, but took individual action through complaints.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, I therefore found that Bhabha's (1994) notion stating that migrants occupy a subaltern liminal space in society applicable in this instance.

For the negotiations that took place between my informants, workers and the state led to their paradoxical marginal place, even with their BME designation that intended to make them more inclusive in society. Whilst, in alignment with Gramsci (1990) I too found that the responses to state processes that adversely affected my informants and workers threatened state control. Thus, I found the Gramscian (cited in Boggs 1976) notion of the social crisis pertinent and attack on state processes evident.

Consequently, I found the following themes arose in the interface between the workers, my elderly black informants and the state bureaucracy. First, the housing association did not deal with the issue of racism or ethnicity generally and the resulting staffing conflicts adequately. This led to conflict between staff members and the protocol of line management became compromised. I therefore found the development of bureaucratic dysfunction as the organisation did not consider the incongruity of the Manager's position and issues it raised, thereby missing the appropriateness of the BME designation, for it has wider focus than colour alone. As a result of the blanket application of policies governing the nature and provision of care services was similarly applied to all groups and this specialist BME service, personal and cultural needs of the elderly were compromised. This is because some of the real day-to-day operations of this BME service were not incorporated into the overall structure. The strategic understanding of the BME concept was not significantly incorporated into working practices by other mainstream Scheme Managers, therefore the peer support was inadequate and generally unavailable for the Scheme Managers at this scheme. I suggest this made the housing association contradictory in the application and execution of the stated BME designation applied to the scheme. As a result Workers became individually powerful in their application of service delivery as individual interpretations of the BME designation arose. Ultimately, this resulted in a lack of organisational clarity because there were differing views about the application of the BME strategy and interaction with the elderly people. This resulted in the development of some ambivalence towards the ethnic and cultural specificity by the workers. Nevertheless, some differences were overcome as the Scheme Managers, some Carers, the Cleaner and Handyman responded to the ethnic and cultural



requirements of the elderly people. Lastly, in relation to the elderly people they too appear to harbour an insular focus as their interface with other migrant cultures proved problematic.

These themes represent the paradoxical nature of the BME designation and application by the housing organisation. For MHT and Lambeth council recognised the need for a black specialist scheme for elderly West Indian migrants but did not provide sufficient specialist policies. The association also had difficulty in responding to issues and support of staff working at the scheme so was incongruent, in respect of the BME ethos, in their management of the local scheme at a senior organisational level. The paradox led to dual systems of operation as workers developed practices that were culturally specific that remained unregulated but locally challenged within the scheme. I suggest that this also led to a potential failure of the organisation's governing ethos of inclusion, valuing diversity and meeting individual needs. However, far from being total outsiders the elderly people were intertwined with the state bureaucracy as residents who sometimes exerted their rights to an appropriate service even though a crisis situation occurred, is maintained and required a resolution. Consequently, power developed in the scheme among the elderly people, and individual workers who supported the elderly people to negotiate their right to be acknowledged. This entanglement personified in overt but mostly subtle covert ways. In addition to using complaints as a method to effect changes when the services received were inappropriate and therefore did not meet their needs.

Finally, in respect of identity and belonging I found that my elderly respondents were able to assert their identity in the scheme as black West Indian elders. The state service recognised ethnic and cultural identity as part of the BME strategy through equal opportunity service provisions, but at times seemed to conflate colour and culture resulting in tensions and frustrations in the interpretation of the strategy. This made my elderly informants' identities ambiguous, where often colour over culture appeared to be of paramount importance. As a result when their colour was addressed it created further issues in respect of cultural identity that consequently affected their inclusion

and sense of belonging. Although my informants are dependent on the state, and I suggest the state assumes the role of surrogate family by maintaining their well-being, there are tensions and disappointments in this relationship that needs further attention and adjustments.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

#### *Introduction*

'You can take me out of Jamaica but you can't take Jamaica out of me.'

The above Jamaican idiom reflects the emotional position many Jamaican migrants maintain, long after leaving Jamaica, even if they never return. In this research, I found a similar fondness that affected the belonging of my informants. Acknowledging Chamberlain's finding that Caribbean migrants have resisted absorption into British society (2005:182), I too suggest that my elderly informants continue to negotiate their position regarding belonging that paradoxically harbour both local and trans-national influences.

This thesis set out to explore the negotiation of belonging concerning the roles of kinship and the state among elderly West Indian migrants residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton, London. Their sense of belonging forms part of the debate in contemporary British society concerning migrants, focusing on the question, is multi-culturalism working? Politicians ask, how do we include the diverse cultures and ethnicities into British society? In the midst of such concerns is the need to define the British identity. In this case, I probed into the realities of multi-culturalism through focusing attention on my informants who left the West Indies approximately 40 years ago. The 26 participants are working-class people who migrated to increase their economic, personal and social status but became reliant on the state for both housing and maintenance of their well-being.

Using Gramsci's (1994) concepts concerning social change I show how my informants and others on their behalf negotiate their position that enables them to gain a sense of belonging. In agreement with Bhabha (1994) I too suggest that they find subaltern placement in British society. However, I depart from his reasoning that they are located on the outside of the contested boundary where

the different cultures meet. I propose a more heterogeneous response because of the differences between them and their subsequent positioning within British society though they are still paradoxically recognised as different.

### *The research framework*

I applied my eclectic frame of reference as both a method of analysis and a basis for evaluation that enabled the development of the themes that emerged. These themes contain paradoxical scenarios that arise out of the complexities between the elderly people with each other, as residents at the scheme, their engagement with the state, family, and as migrants within their local and global community.

My key research tools, identified in chapter 1, the narrative and participant observation, proved powerful methods through which my informants could express life experiences. My life cycle focus provided the pathway to process kinship associations where I uncovered cyclical patterns regarding gender relations, kinship ties and belonging within my informants' families that underpin their contemporary associations. As a result of the multifaceted issues regarding movement and establishing a sense of belonging to a new place in new communities, complex issues and resolutions arose that also highlighted issues concerning individuality. The processes that I encountered consequently opened up the story of the social and emotional journey taken by my informants through reclassifying home and establishing a sense of belonging.

Continual movements create perpetual transitions, so the movement away from an established home and transition to a new home affects one's sense of belonging. This transition is equally true for those who migrated from the West Indies. Indeed such outward migration affects their sense of belonging as well as those left behind. This is because it is recognised that the migrant's journey encompasses notions that reflect movement and dispersal attracting the use of concepts such as identity (Helms 1988), space and power (Trouillot 1998; Hetherington 1998). Identity and belonging have consequently become coupled and cross-referenced. Similarly, these important aspects underscore my

assessment process because my informants are involved in movement and the consequences on their identity and citizenship that accompany it. My findings show that migration for my informants is about movement, dispersal, displacement, challenging eventual fixity and placement. My outcomes therefore provide contextual analysis of my informants' position in relation to the migrant identity through the applied mixture of symbolic interaction, phenomenological and structural approaches assisted by post-modern and critical theory that I discussed in chapter 2. My research framework therefore comprises seven components: (1) looking at the effects of geographical distance/locality and spatial connections, (2) the effects of globalisation, (3) the resulting personal psychological factors, (4) my informants' regional and personal histories, (5) economic factors (6) their class position, which ultimately brings the involvement of the state in their lives. Indeed the state attempts to provide services to them in recognition of their ethnicity and my informants utilise their personal agency to affect the provisions afforded to them. I also include (7) the adaptations that occur during their life course and as elders.

### *Research findings*

My findings, in chapter 3 regarding my informants' experience as black elders in the sheltered housing scheme as well as residents in the local community, show that they form a heterogeneous group whose elderly status is marginal and ambiguously defined. They held mixed views concerning their elderhood. Interestingly some elderly men sought the company of younger women, and some engaged in relations with them, paradoxically practicing age discrimination. The men thereby add a multi-dimensional complexity to their status as continuing fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers. Interestingly, the majority of elderly women did not seek the company of men.

Although the state defines and provides services for the elderly, my informants' notion of elderliness, status and position in society is determined by their class position as working-class elders, and their cultural experiences as both West Indians and British citizens.

Indeed my informants thought that the state should play a more decisive role to protect elderly people. Nevertheless the state provides my research subjects with accommodation in which they occupy as individual residential units, including the female elders. However, due to residency at a specialist black sheltered housing scheme my informants are separated from other elders in sheltered housing in British society. I suspect this will generate debates and further actions concerning this policy.

In addition to residing in a borough with a high crime rate, as elderly people they are consequently victims of crimes perpetrated by various people of different ethnicities. However, the old people overcome their fears of younger people and engage cautiously with the community, even though they do not feel protected as elders within it.

In chapter 4, in respect of looking at my informants' family ties, I found fragmentation in their formative kin structure. It transpired that due to the profound culture of migration, kin ties became strained and some kin ties lost, such as ties with brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and their offspring. Indeed men were often absent or estranged from the kinship ties more than women. My informants therefore hold romantic notions concerning returning home and most with family land disengage from the institution of family land as representing belonging to a place they can practically return to. Clearly they are no longer rooted in the family land institution, as proposed by Besson (1979, 1999a, 2002, 2005) nor do they successfully experience return migration as proposed by Olwig (1997, 1999, 2005). Although they have the right to return, they distance from family land similar to Solien's (1959) finding that a pragmatic restricted relationship to family land ensued, after migrants left family land with other relatives residing on it. As a result my informants similarly found a return to family land difficult because they became practically excluded from the home as other family members utilised the space thus making re-integration impossible. Any possibility of a return became unrealistic as the majority of those who tried to return home found out. They had become individualised and distant as a result of migration and held the status of 'other' when attempting to return home.

Consequently, I suggest that my elderly informants stayed in England mainly as a result of their practical inability to return home. By default, rather than by choice, my informants have established their residential roots in England where they receive assistance from the state. Although Mills, from her work in Carriacou in 2002, found migrants retain a share in family land that binds them over distances (2007:235). Unfortunately, I did not find such strong bonds to enable permanent return. Indeed, the cost of my elderly informants' well-being and healthcare concerned them whereas in England they could rely on the state and in some cases on their children. I also acknowledge that my sample comprises solely of working-class people with limited economic ability rather than comprising of a mixture of working-class and more affluent middle-class people. Therefore my findings reflect their limited choices and stronger attachment to the state.

I therefore also found my informants create and occupy a place in England, similar to Gardner's (2002) findings amongst the Bangladeshi community in England. The Bangladeshi elders have created a particular sense of belonging due to their migration experience making return home difficult, for they changed due to their migration experience. My parallel is made here because for those of my informants who tried circulatory migration, their return back to Jamaica to live was unsuccessful because they could not fit back in. They had changed and were influenced by their experience of living in England. In addition the long-term absence from Jamaica made it a less familiar place and without a welfare state and insufficient finance to support and manage their well-being, they could not maintain residency. I therefore suggest they balance moving in and out of the West Indies and manoeuvring between cultures fixed in their uniquely adapted culture.

Consequently I propose that for those moving between England and 'back home', they are able to maintain a place within each society but they are seen as separate within each. This is because my informants develop differing characteristics that set them apart from others within the society, situating them not in an external boundary liminal space but in an internal liminal subaltern

space. For they are accepted within society as a minority marginal group, seen as different, with their own peculiarities.

In Chapter 5, a I pattern of gender differentiation emerged because my informants who, as a group, replicated a family structure similar to those they were born into, that I previously highlighted in chapter 4. This pattern exposed absent paternal kin ties as a result of migration and personal relationships. My findings are in contrast to Bauer and Thompson (2006), who found extensive help given to kin members trans-nationally located. Indeed, in my sample the male elder was often absent from or left the familial home when his children were youngsters. As a result my elderly male informants experience a high degree of estrangement from their children. This situation results from the marginal input they made to the household and family relations when younger. Indeed the relationships between men and women appeared to be surrounded by mistrust of each other. However, there is other evidence of strengthening localised paternal ties in England. Reynolds (2006) found a variety of supportive and powerful connections that men retain in their families with some of their children, even after the relationship has ended. Indeed, Chevannes (2001) in contrast to my findings, found, in Dominica, that boys grew emotionally closer to fathers, for their fathers were used to provide strict discipline (2001:117).

Alternatively, my female informants enjoy more contact and ties with their children because they were mostly their sole carer for a large part of their upbringing in England. Although, it must be added, that my female informants too experienced estrangement from some children residing overseas due to migration as well as a tragic personal circumstance causing separation. In this chapter I also made a connection with the culture of migration among West Indians that facilitated a matrifocal tendency arising out of the practicality of the situation where mothers were left with their children. Through my focus on the development of their kinship structure in relation to race, class and gender, influenced by Anderson-Levy (2001), I also suggest my female elders secured a firmer basis to establish a sense of belonging locally through closer attachment to their children.



In Chapter 6, I turned my attention to uncovering how my informants bonded as a group in the sheltered housing scheme to uncover how this helped their belonging. The differences between them are marked by two important opposing themes, respectability and reputation (Wilson 1973), that also mirror generally the gender differentiations and provide a basis on which fear, mistrust and petty rivalries exist. However, my elderly informants interwove their West Indian culture into the social activities undertaken within the scheme and joined mainly with other West Indians in pursuits outside of the scheme. Through manoeuvres and skilful negotiations around each other, my elderly informants maintain a sense of a West Indian community, through the establishment of a cultural collective consciousness. For those less physically and mentally able, a greater reliance on others and the state ensued. This relationship provided a sense of attachment and belonging not found through kin ties. Nevertheless, whilst the state upheld the elders' well-being, cultural sensitivities were not always met.

Importantly, I found that my informants were positioned by the meeting of two cultures, similar to Bhabha's (1994) 'third space' where they negotiate their place. However, I find that my informants are located in the scheme and local Brixton community within British society. Through creativity they maintain their cultural practices as they bend those devised by the state to suit their needs by asserting themselves through their personal agency with the help of others. Here they pushed boundaries similar to notions contained within the term carnivalesque, which is used to describe rebellious social actions (Bakhtin 1984). Although there are differences, they are unified as 'other', West Indian and predominantly Jamaican. Nonetheless, paradoxically some people are marginal within their created spaces; yet find sufficient affiliation to the group. I therefore find a more layered dimension of belonging than Bhabha suggests because the migrant group harbours internal differences. Overall, I found that although riddled with internal differences, dislikes and bickering based on gender differences, fear and mistrust, the notions of respect and reputation both separates and holds them together under a common bond of other, black, West Indian and Jamaican.

Chapter 7 further explored how my informants' ethnicity and culture impacted on their fitting into British society, specifically focusing on the impact of strategies to include them. I uncovered that although the host nation tries to cater specifically to their ethnicity and cultural needs, contentious issues arose.

It is known that the migrants' place is one that is created through the negotiation that takes place between the migrant group, with particular racial and cultural peculiarities, and the country they enter (Bhabha 1994; Said 1993). Bhabha suggests that social processes create a hybrid space in which migrants belong. This is because the cultural differences that come into contact with each other remain insignificantly mutually penetrated so the migrant finds belonging in a newly created 'third space'. This position is located outside of mainstream society in a liminal space (Bhabha 1994:44-45) and is facilitated by the process of creolisation. Through this process cultures adapt with people using their personal agency to create their positioning.

Indeed, issues arose among the black staff because they held differing views towards the appropriateness of specifically catering for black elderly migrants as a specific ethnic and cultural group, sharing a West Indian heritage. There were conflicts, nevertheless, some workers advocated on their behalf and indeed some of the elderly informants made their views heard and pressed or navigated through the system and policies to get their specific needs met. However, these were often compromised. I suggest the differences between staff, the elders and the state system created bureaucratic dysfunction. For, as a group, set aside within the mainstream system, the workers often operated outside of the designated policies to advocate on my informants' behalf. In doing so, they used their individual initiative or worked collectively and thereby became powerful. Their actions exposed the flaws within the existing structure and policies governing services to this BME (black, minority ethnic) community that requires attention. The structure of policies governing ethnicity and culturally specific services is contradictory so enabled an insular focus to arise for this elderly group at the scheme.

However, I acknowledge that the migrants' national allegiances exist across boundaries, for as suggested by Said (1993), there are cultural points of collaboration as well as many points of difference with the host nation they migrate to. I found this to be true as well as finding weakened trans-national connections. I consequently suggest that my informants occupy a place of belonging that is 'part of' British society but located in a 'subsidiary' position 'within' it. This is similar to Bhabha's (1994) and recently, Sheller's (2003) recognition of the subaltern position the migrant occupies within society. However, rather than Bhabha's suggestion of an externalised in-between place that locates them at the boundary, on the outskirts of their formative society and the society in the new country of residence, I suggest that my informants' are placed within their formative and new societies but are seen as different from the rest due to their peculiarities. Society thereby acquires a complex formation.

Consequently, similar to Bhabha (1994), I suggest that the elders' negotiation of belonging is 'socio-ethnic-psychological', harbouring simultaneous infusing and diffusing cultural associations. These associations are realigned in response to the changes experienced in society that affects my informants' sense of self, culture and community. A contradictory liaison therefore ensues in Britain between them exerting their right to belong as black West Indians and issues created by their cultural and racial differences that become problematic and mark them as different. Similarly the elders experience being different in Jamaica for through their migration experience their local relations and cultural practices have changed. As a result, to maintain their psychological well-being they tend to group together as they recognise their difference to the rest of the community in their former and new countries.

Therefore my informants' experience of rooting that seeks to re-establish them in Britain becomes riddled with inconsistencies and conflict. Policies, such as the BME policies to overcome the conflicts associated with exclusion becomes the subject of further policies concerned with inclusion. These twists and turns by the state reflect the agency of my informants and their aids, mirroring their manoeuvres as they push against the state to negotiate their place. Therefore the policies continually change to find the appropriate ingredients that support

the social transformations enabling my informants' continuing inclusion. This leaves significant opportunities for them to retain an emotional attachment to their formative culture and place of origin, regardless of why they left as they cling to their familiar ethnic and cultural identity. In part, this is because the attempt to foster a sense of belonging in Britain is difficult, due to the complexities surrounding incorporation, these complexities derive from the fact that the urban centre they occupy is so multicultural that the nation state struggles to find a British identity within which to incorporate everyone. In addition, as elders they face particular difficulties because this elderly group are multifaceted and harbour internal differences arising out of their complex social processes that favour disjunction. I therefore suggest that this situation produces, what I term, a 'disconnection to incorporation'. As a result my informants associate with a localised West Indian community. However, in opposition to Bhabha I suggest that this is a recognised part of British society representing a contested notion of fixity.

My informants are therefore situated in this society in a situation where confusions arise out of the meeting of different cultures and ethnicities that are continually being worked out. So influenced by Gramsci (cited in Boggs 1976) I suggest they negotiate their position with the help of others to resolve their crisis. Nevertheless, I am in agreement with Olwig (1999, 2005) that they develop a local symbolic cultural site through their residency and inclusion into the systems of incorporation, personified though the struggles and resistance to loss of their West Indian identity. These crisis scenarios, I suggest, are part of British society.

#### *Where the elders belong*

Most of my informants left the West Indies to improve their economic and social status and then return to the West Indies that was seen as home. This desire is of crucial importance because in the main, they were not seeking belonging in Britain but continue making adjustment to remaining in Britain.

Ultimately, their culture of migratory movement produced a structure of mobility that eventually became immobilised due to their working class position. This immobilisation hindered their ability to return home, where they became the 'other' in Jamaican society. Similarly they have become the 'other' in England because their ethnic and cultural identity largely keeps them apart. So my elderly informants paradoxically become 'novel' entities from 'there' and 'here' as they physically and emotionally remain 'the West Indian' away from home. Nonetheless my informants paradoxically maintain a dual emotional attachment to their former home and to England. In this process they simultaneously maintain their West Indian, and in the majority, Jamaican identity as British citizens residing in England. Moreover due to their dependency on the state the role it plays in their lives determines and secures their local ties more than kin.

My informants are thereby engulfed in the antithesis of homing, which I suggest arises from the migratory culture that they are part of, which is about continual journeying but paradoxically they find placement. This migratory process ultimately creates a certain amount of instability. Nevertheless I found it also enabled stability. This stability is reflected in the strengthened maternal local kin relations in Britain that developed as a result of my informants' long-term residency. In addition, their kinship system is tied in with a sense of landholding facilitating placement in the West Indian society but is broken and confused by the cultural practice of movement, separation and eventual loss under the direction of globalisation. My informants do associate with kin, but migration, gender and personal relationships affect these bonds, although Bauer and Thompson (2006) found stronger trans-national connections from research including both middle-class and working-class families. However, the elders have found freedom, as suggested by Wardle (1999), freedom from abject poverty and uncertainty concerning their well-being as a result of being residents in Britain and recipients of the welfare state that has assumed the role of a surrogate family.

Finally, I suggest that it takes more than one generation to become rooted for my elderly informants are what I call the 'transitory generation' that has begun the process of relocating that encompasses turmoil and seeks resolutions. I

suggest that, although future generations will continue this process to establish firm roots, more integration and belonging in the mainstream, conflicts might still prove to be an excluding mechanism.

Nevertheless, I question the desire to belong in England for my elderly informants, because, although they have resided in England for decades their will is multifaceted and most often focused outside of assuming an English identity. I therefore propose that their desire to belong is uncertain, but they do express the basic human need for attachment and acceptance. Herein lies their 'marginal within places' position, where some are going through processes of trying to go home, with all of them trying to fit in, in England. For what they have is not quite enough for the mainstream 'there' or 'here', for as a consequence of migration, my informants appear too free from kinship ties that bond tightly.

#### *Contribution to Anthropology*

My research therefore provides insight into the contemporary lives of elderly migrant West Indians who reside in the sheltered housing scheme. As such it is of contributory value to anthropology because there is an absence of anthropological enquiry and ethnography about this particular group of elderly lower-class, West Indian, long-term migrants. My thesis therefore adds new information about them as they continually engage and disengage with their families and create new alliances with the state and new associations of belonging in England through their residency at the sheltered housing scheme, thereby contributing to information concerning ageing and elderliness.

My assessment framework can be applied to understanding migrant communities in respect of cultural adaptation, belonging and the ensuing trans-national familial connections. This research framework acknowledges that lives are shaped by historical, external economic, political and social forces in conjunction with the personalised emotional responses that individuals make to their lives. It therefore adds to knowledge concerning migratory experiences, cultural adaptation and trans-national family connections that both exist and diminish through great geographical distance that brings challenges to notions

of belonging. Through my historical focus I have incorporated the life course into my frame of analytical assessment that provides generational depth to a multifaceted framework to understand these changes, with some similarity to research methods used in recent work by Reynolds (2005), Bauer and Thompson (2006), Besson and Olwig (2005), and Olwig (2007). However, because I focus on working-class migrants, my perspective is different and provides a further contribution to the understanding of the Caribbean family.

I believe this work will be of interest to policy makers within the state administrative processes who devise services for ethnic minorities, particularly to those with an interest in inclusion, diversity, race and multi-cultural issues from the migrant perspective as a result of providing interesting insights from both my elderly informants' and workers' perspectives. Finding my male informants mainly estranged from their families, particularly when left as sole carer, opens a new avenue for further investigation regarding the interaction of such men with their children, wider families and the state and issues regarding parenting.

In order to advance knowledge of the consequences of migration on belonging, it would also be interesting to pursue further research into the issues of dislocation and the effect that this has on the community back in the West Indies as many people move away from their former home. Questions could arise asking how the local rural lower-class communities maintain their roots, kinship ties and sense of community amid the mass out migration as well as looking at the effect of return migration, particularly in the rural areas. This focus would provide an understanding of the other side of the coin to see how migration affected the roots of the rural lower-class. It would also be interesting to look at the second, third and fourth generation British born of West Indian heritage to understand their sense of belonging that would provide information on kinship and cultural adaptation, incorporation and cultural change through successive generations. Further research among working class elderly migrants outside such a scheme would also provide useful insights into belonging.

## **Appendix A**



Figure A

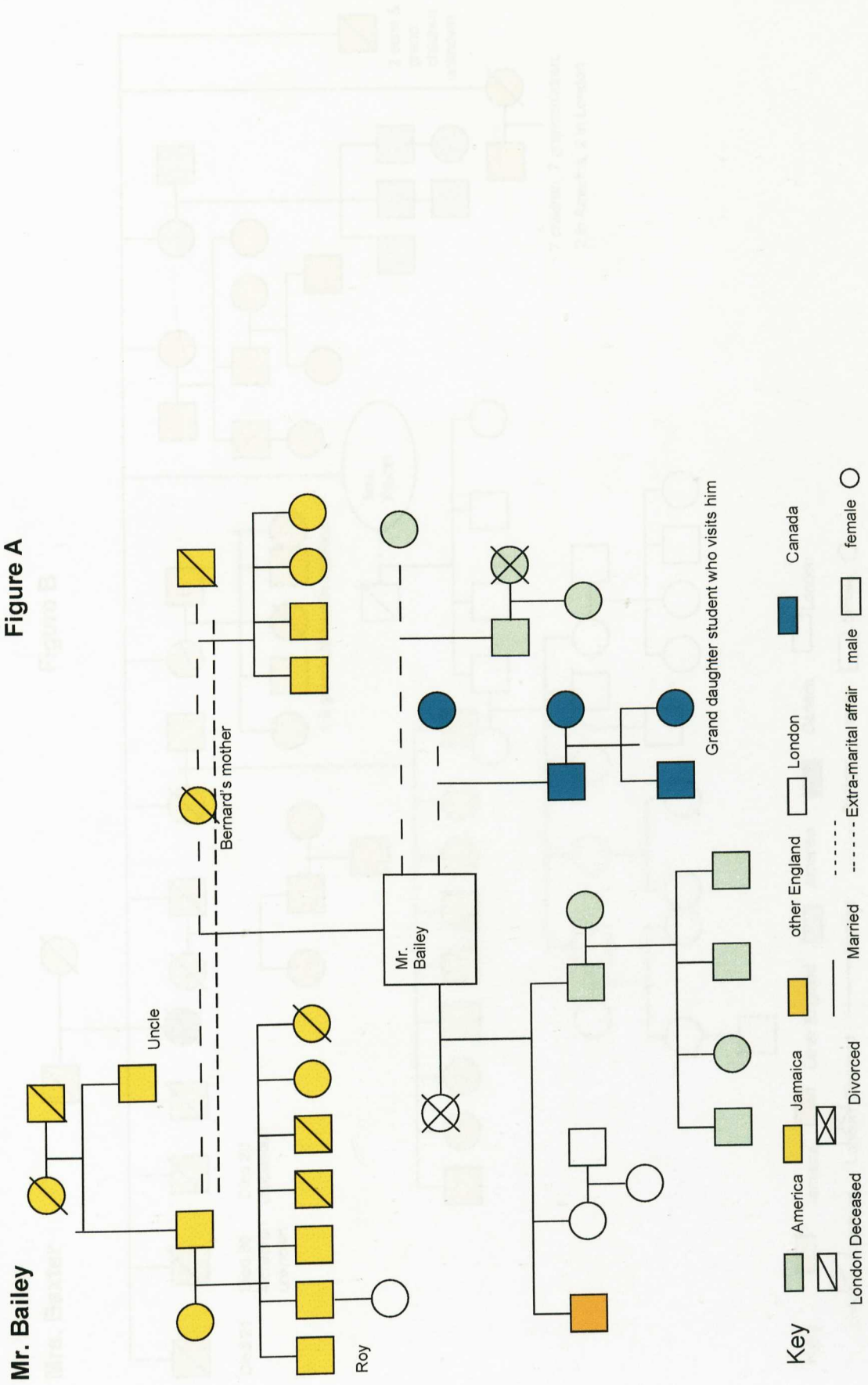
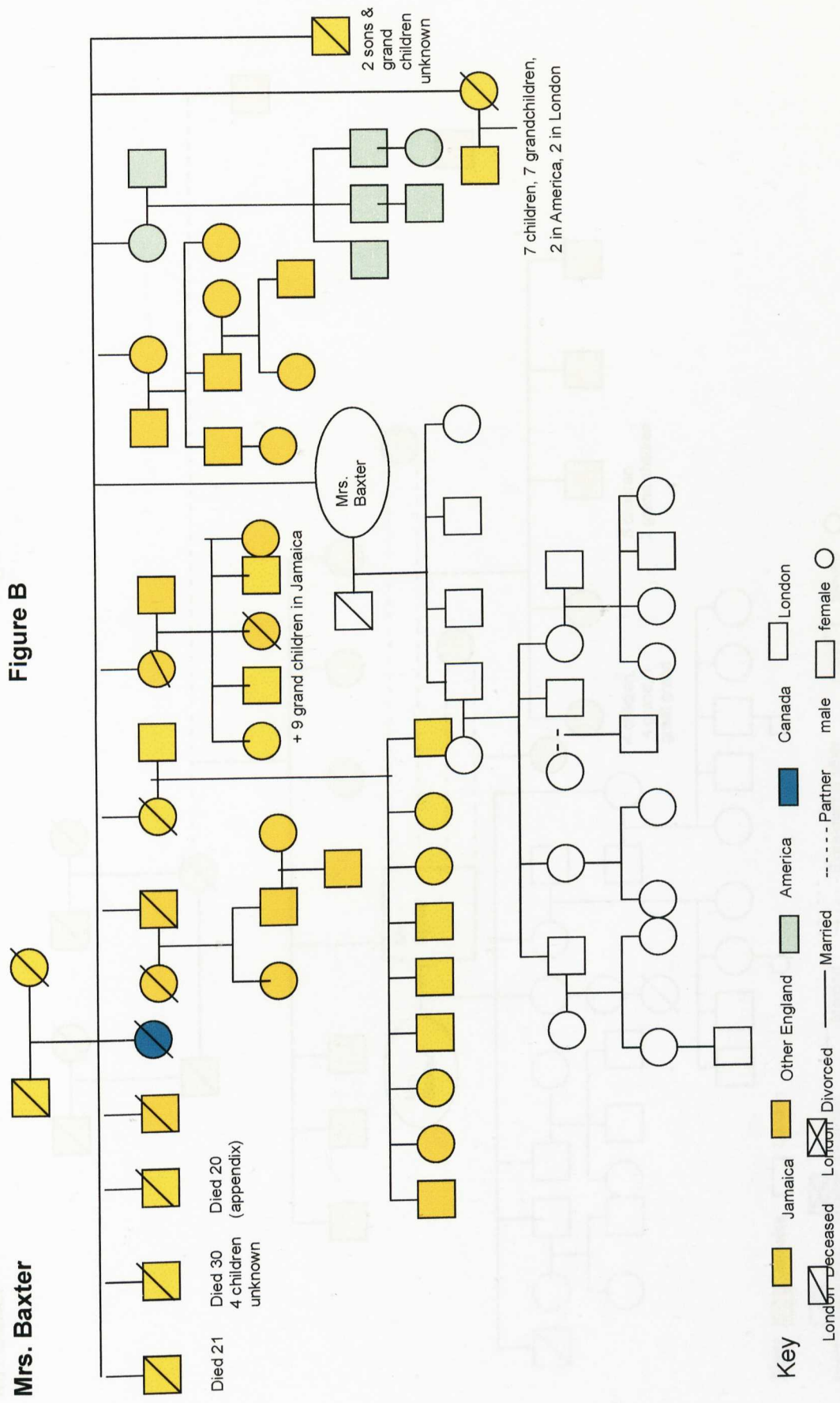


Figure C



**Mr. Baker**

**Figure C**

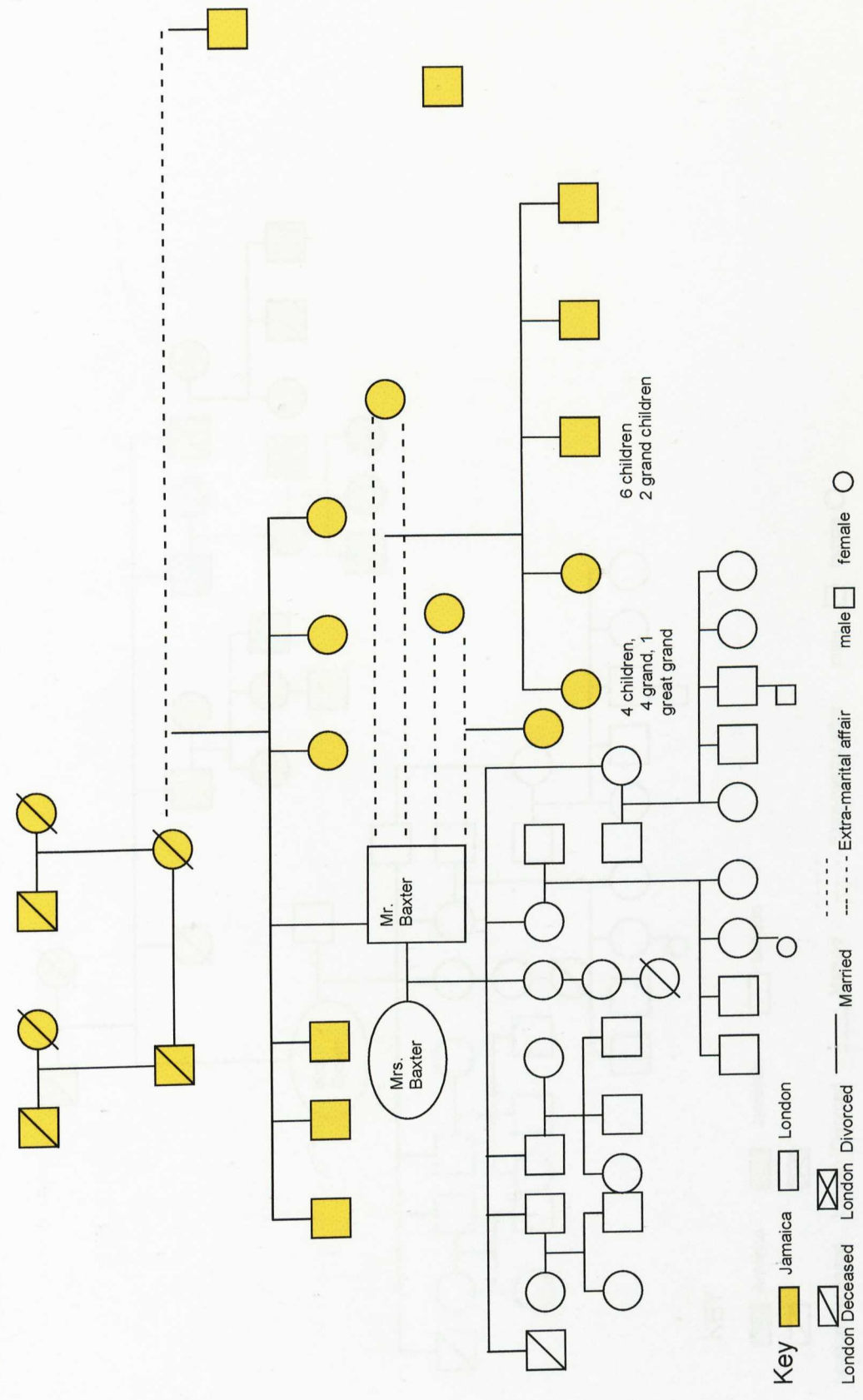
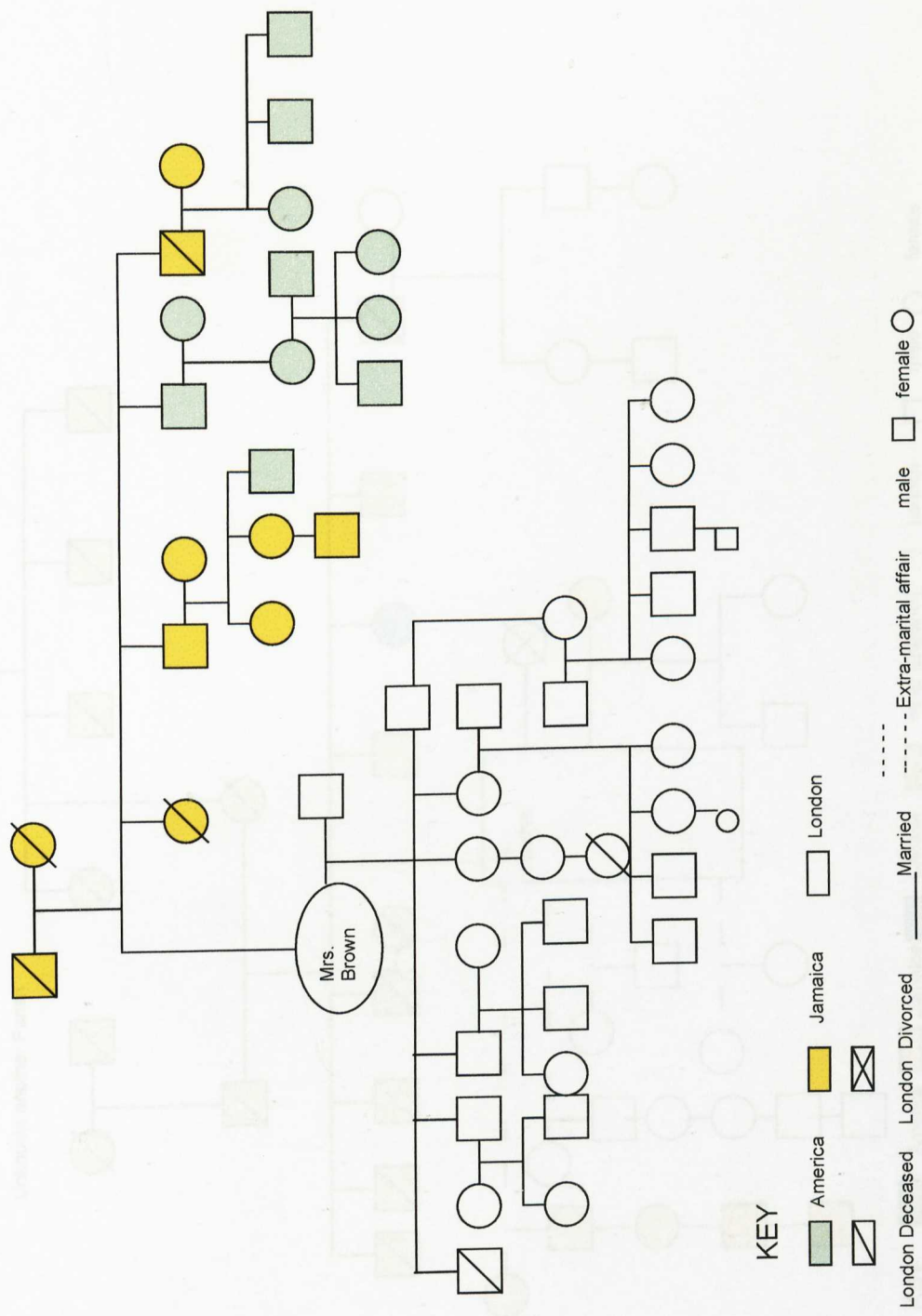


Figure D

Mrs. Baker



Mr. Earles

Figure E

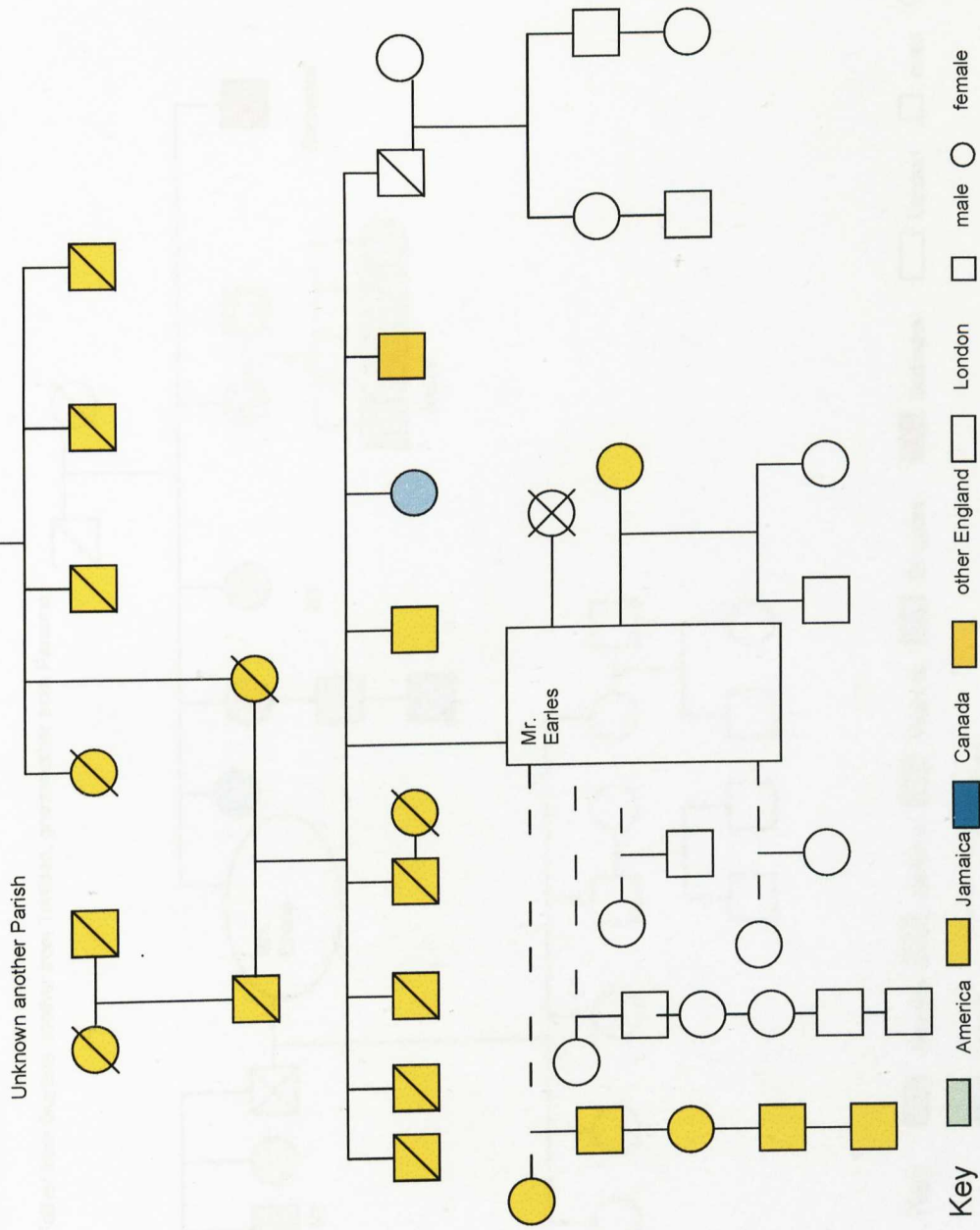
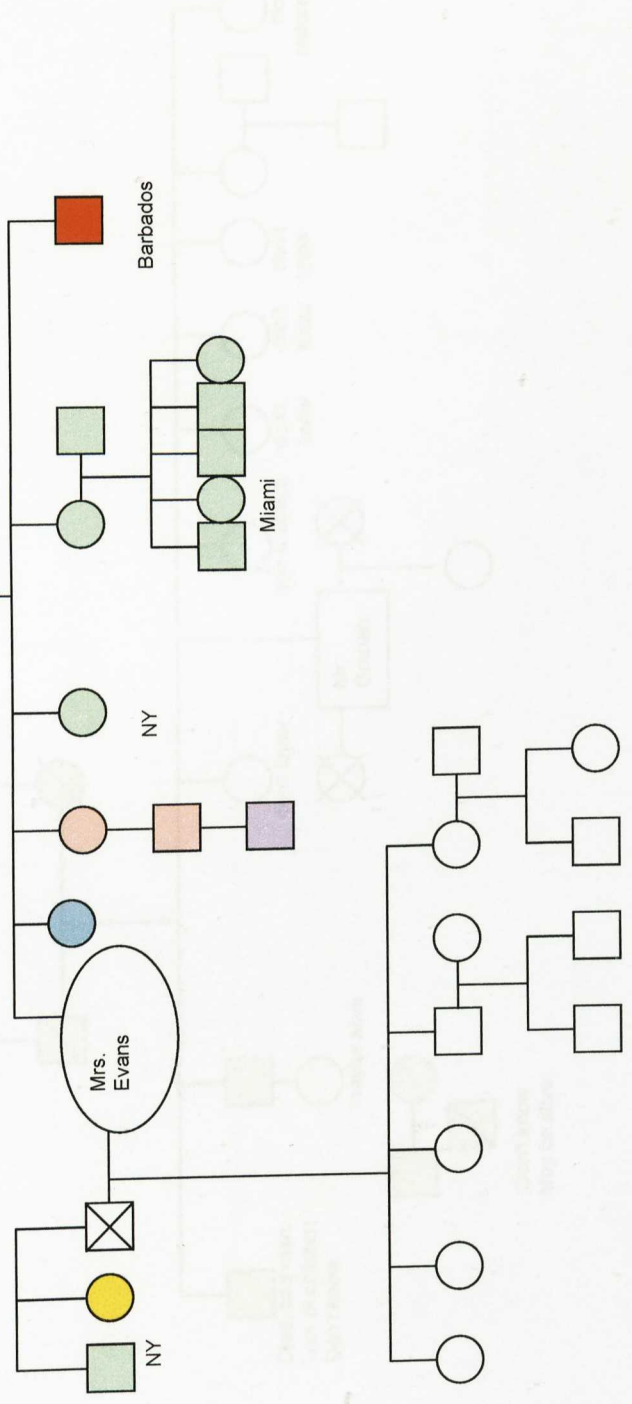


Figure F

Mrs. Evans

Father from Guyana, mother from Trinidad, grandmother from Panama

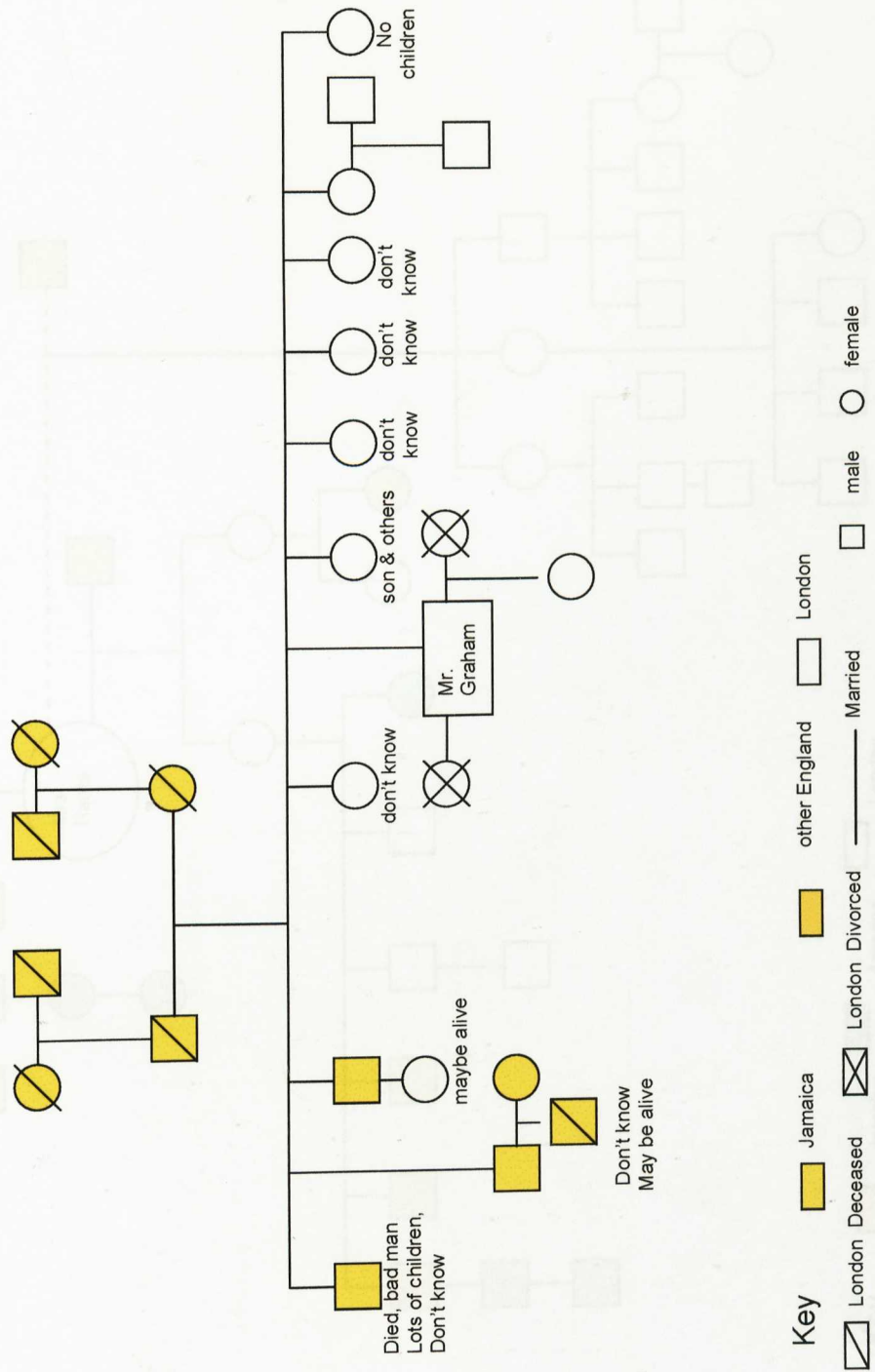


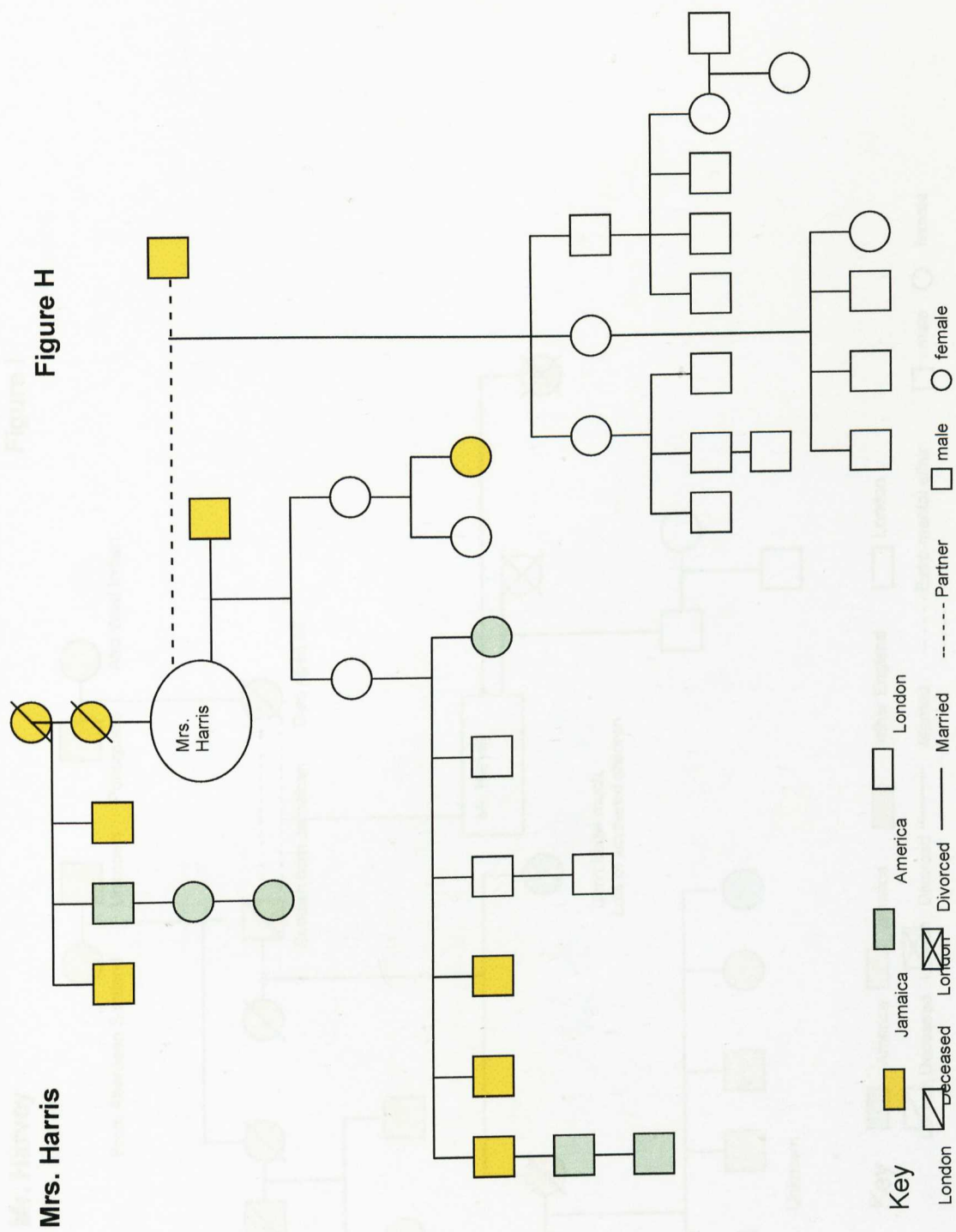
**Key**    America    Jamaica    Barbados    St. Lucia    London    London    male    female

Canada    married

Mr. Griffiths

Figure G







Mr. Harvey

Figure 1

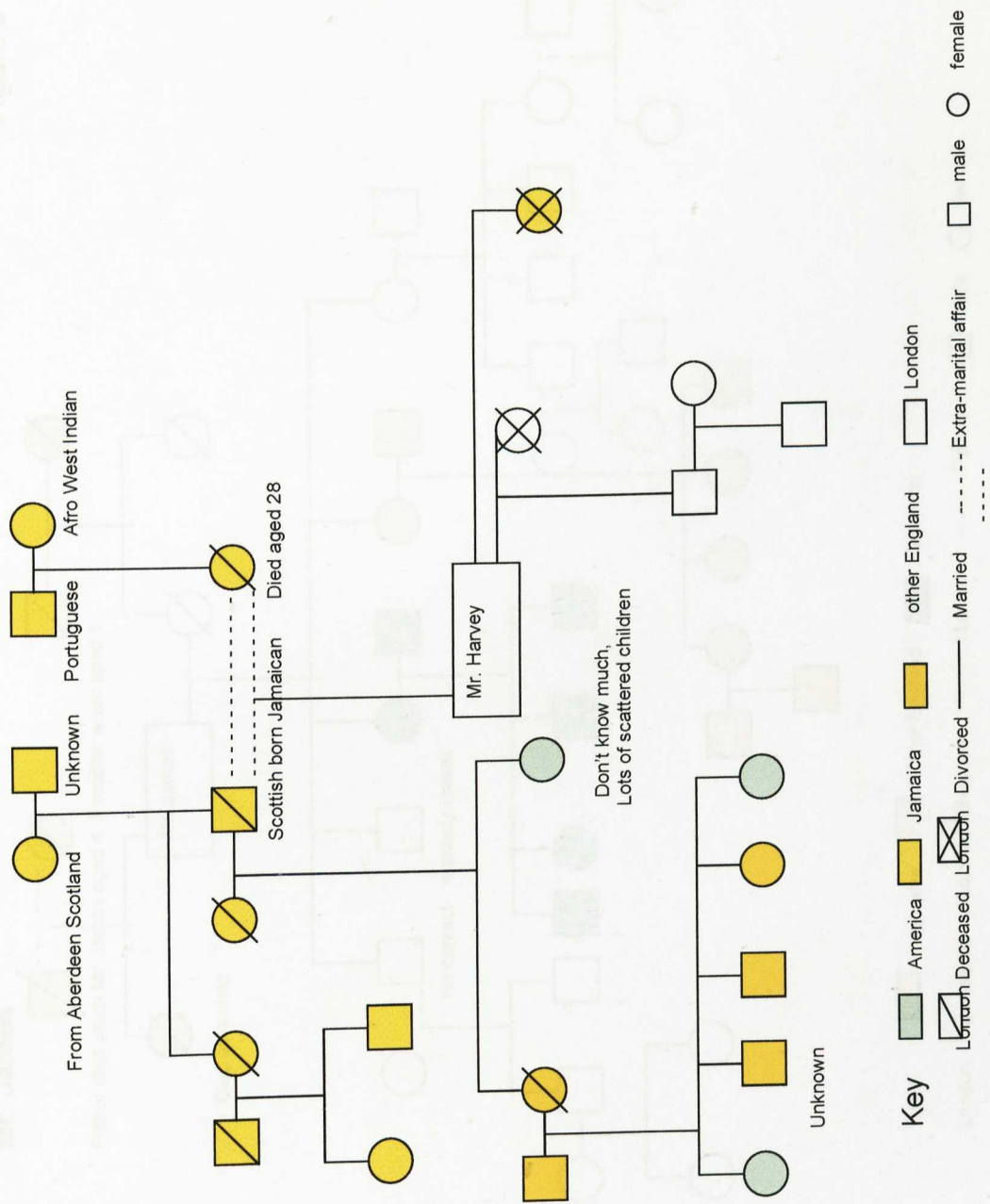
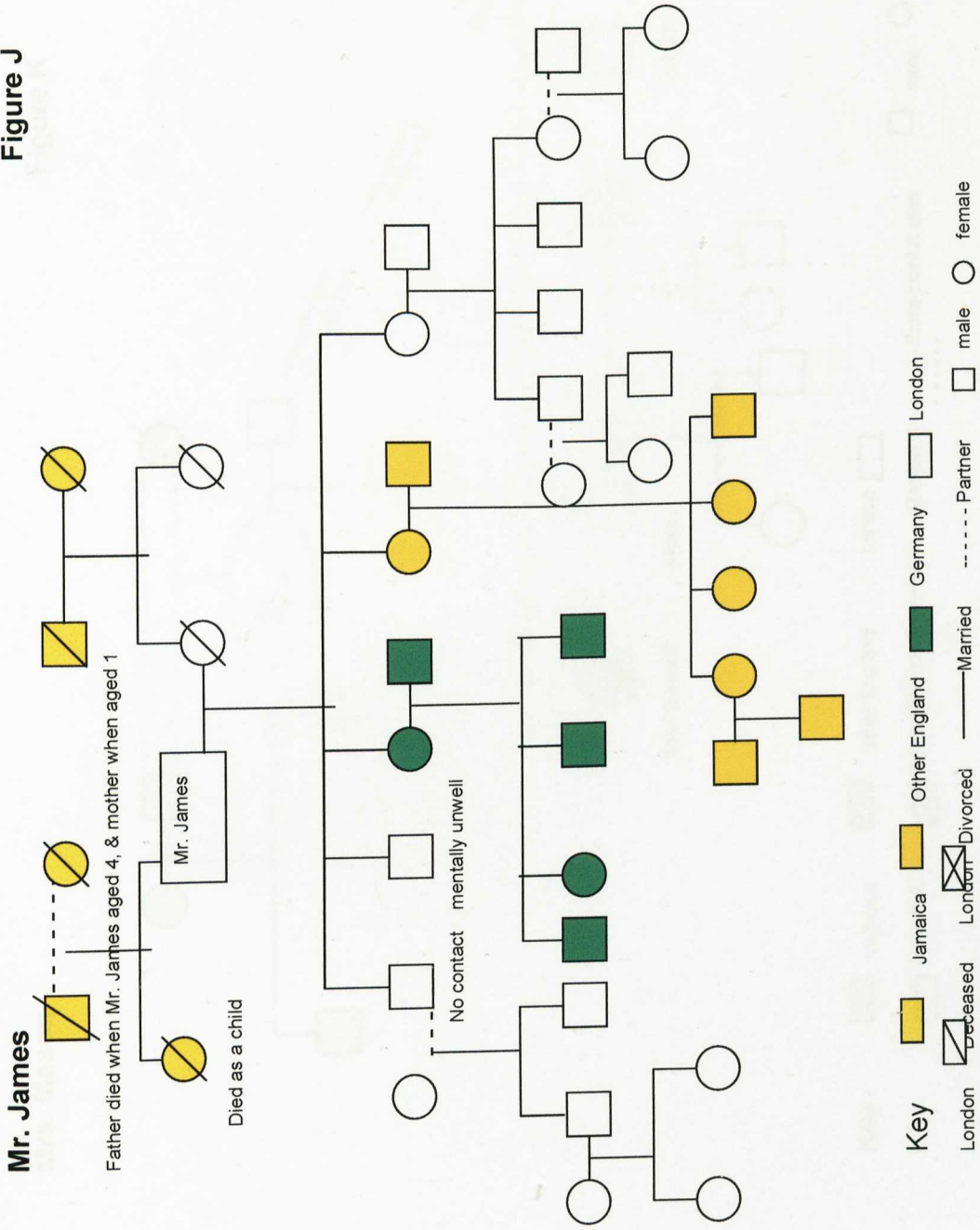
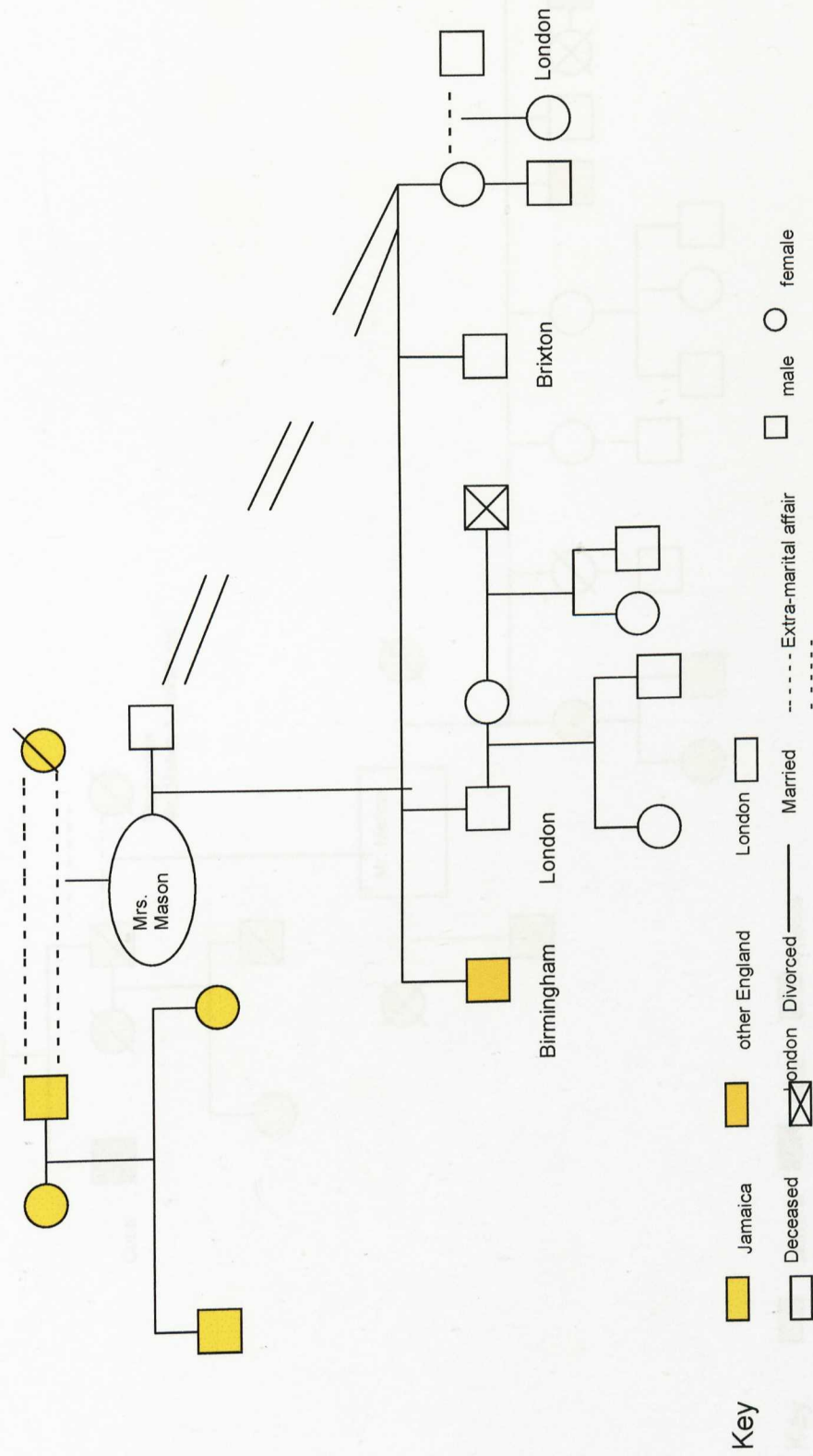


Figure J



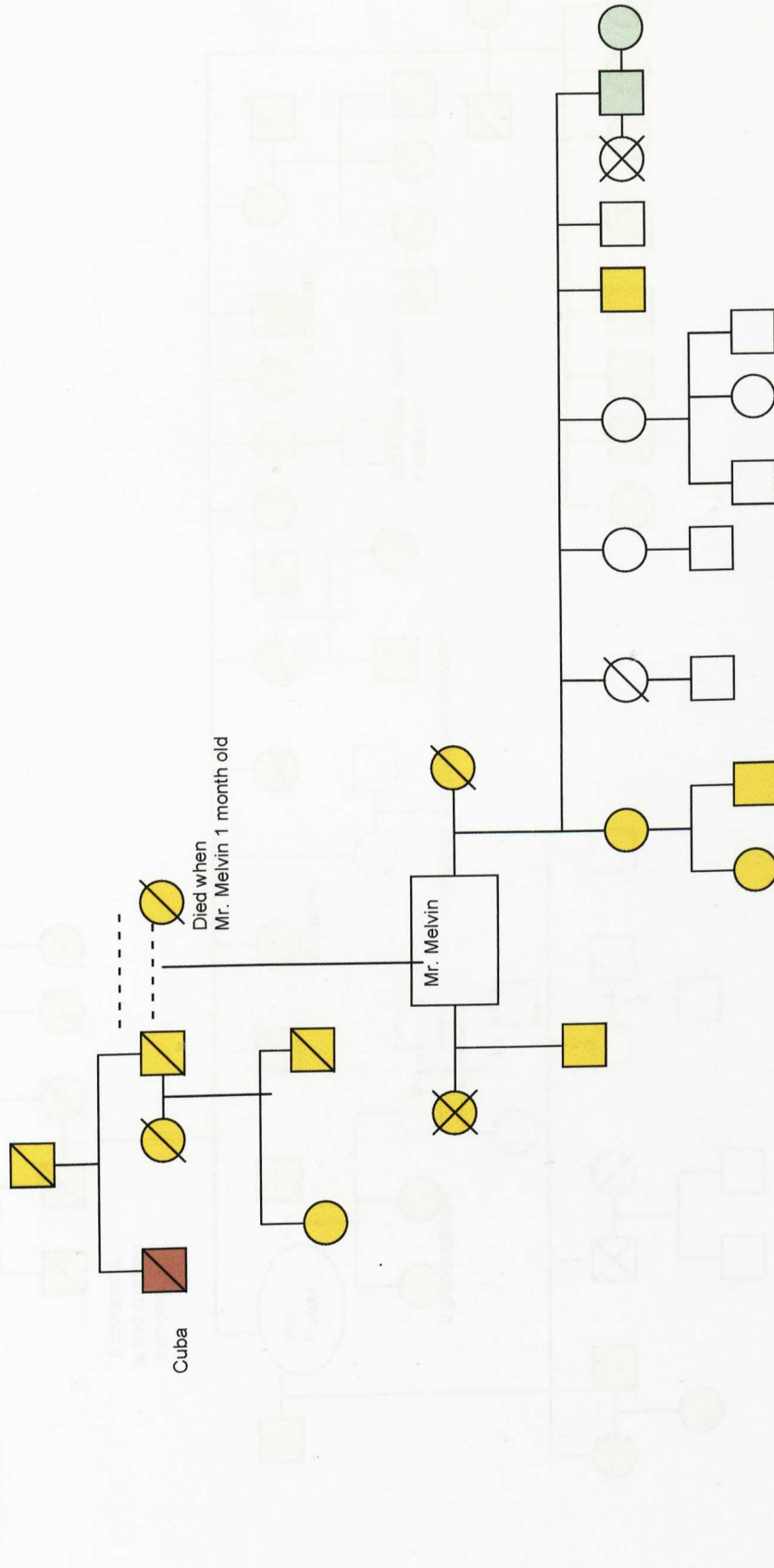
**Mrs. Mason**

**Figure K**



Mr. Melvin

Figure L

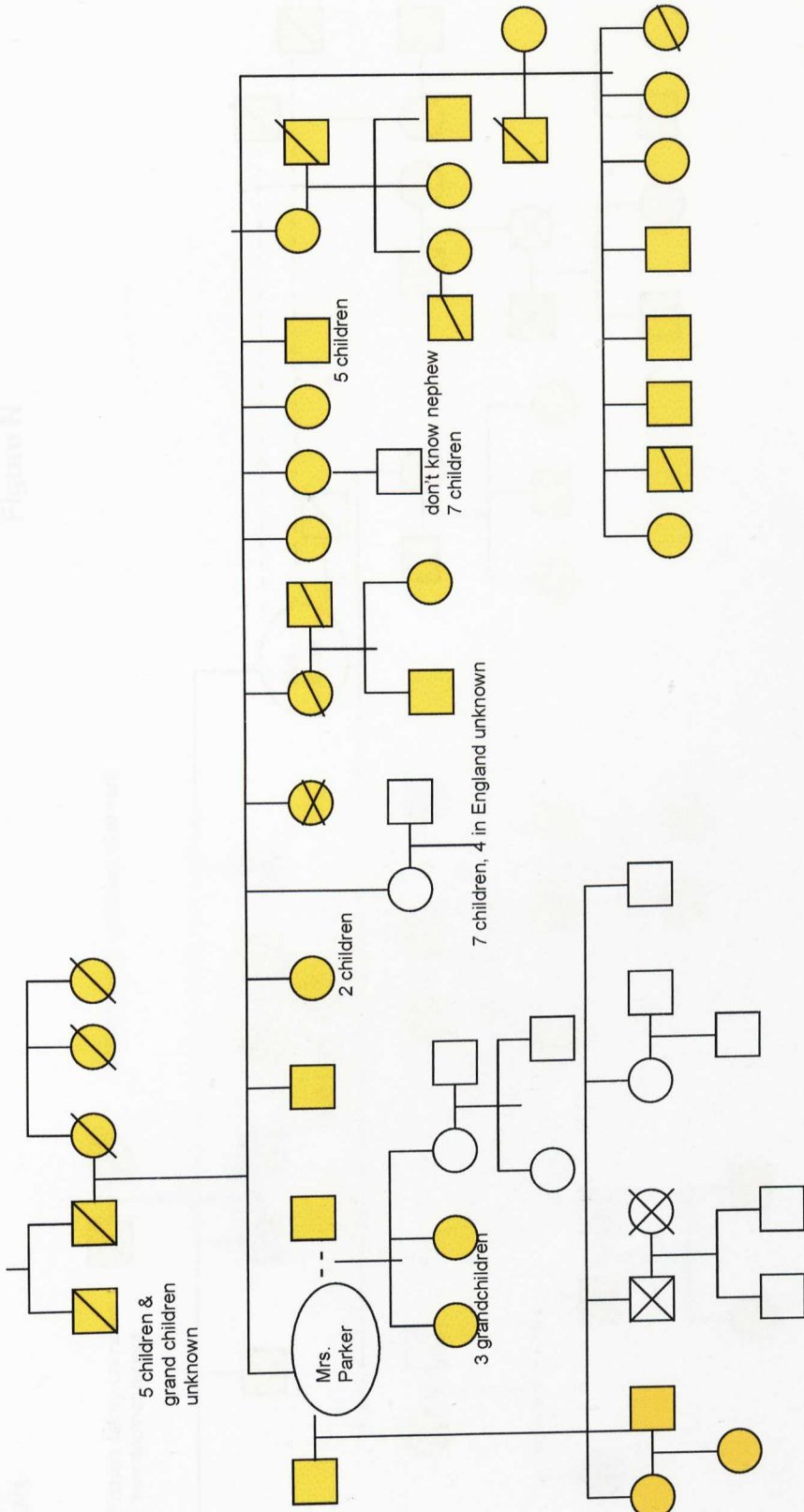


**Key**

- Yellow square: Jamaica
- Brown square: Cuba
- White square: America
- White square with diagonal slash: Deceased
- White circle with diagonal slash: London
- White square with diagonal slash: Divorced
- Solid line: Married
- Dashed line: Extreme-Marital
- White circle: male
- White square: female

**Mrs. Parker**

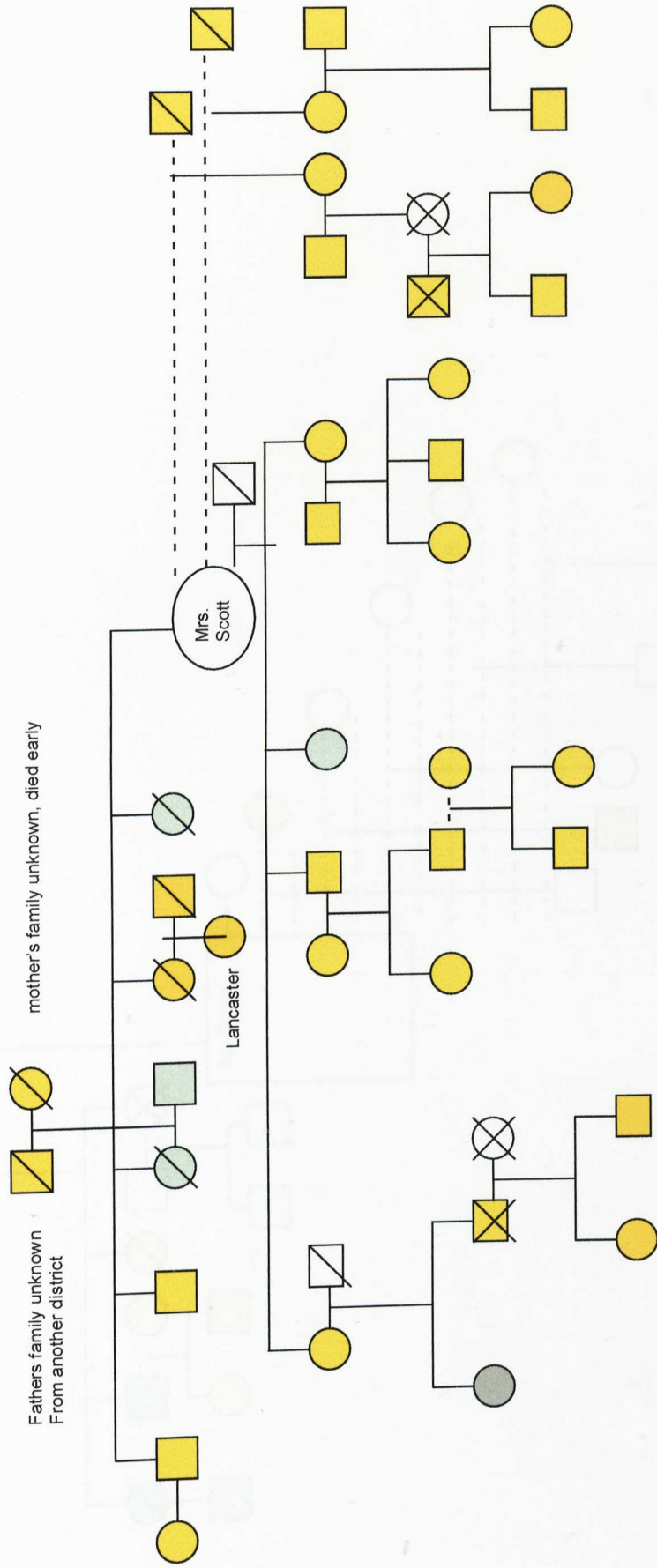
**Figure M**



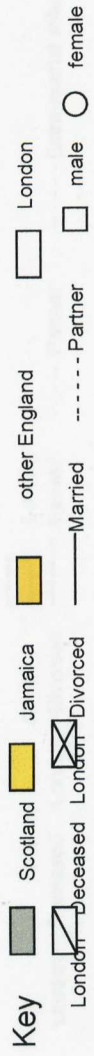
**Key**

- Jamaica
- other England
- London
- Deceased
- Divorced
- Married
- male
- female

**Mrs. Scott**

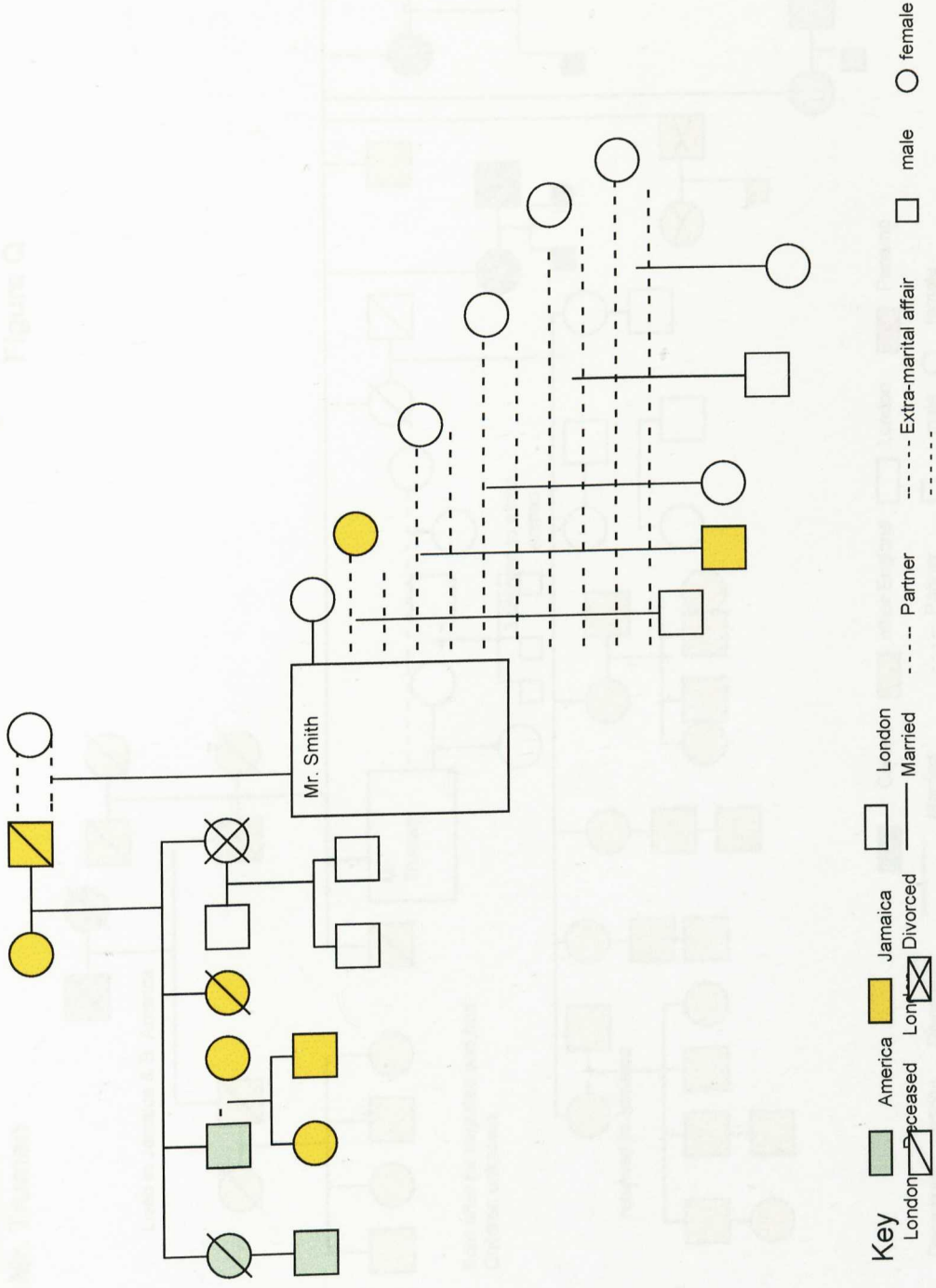


**Figure N**



Mr. Smith

Figure P

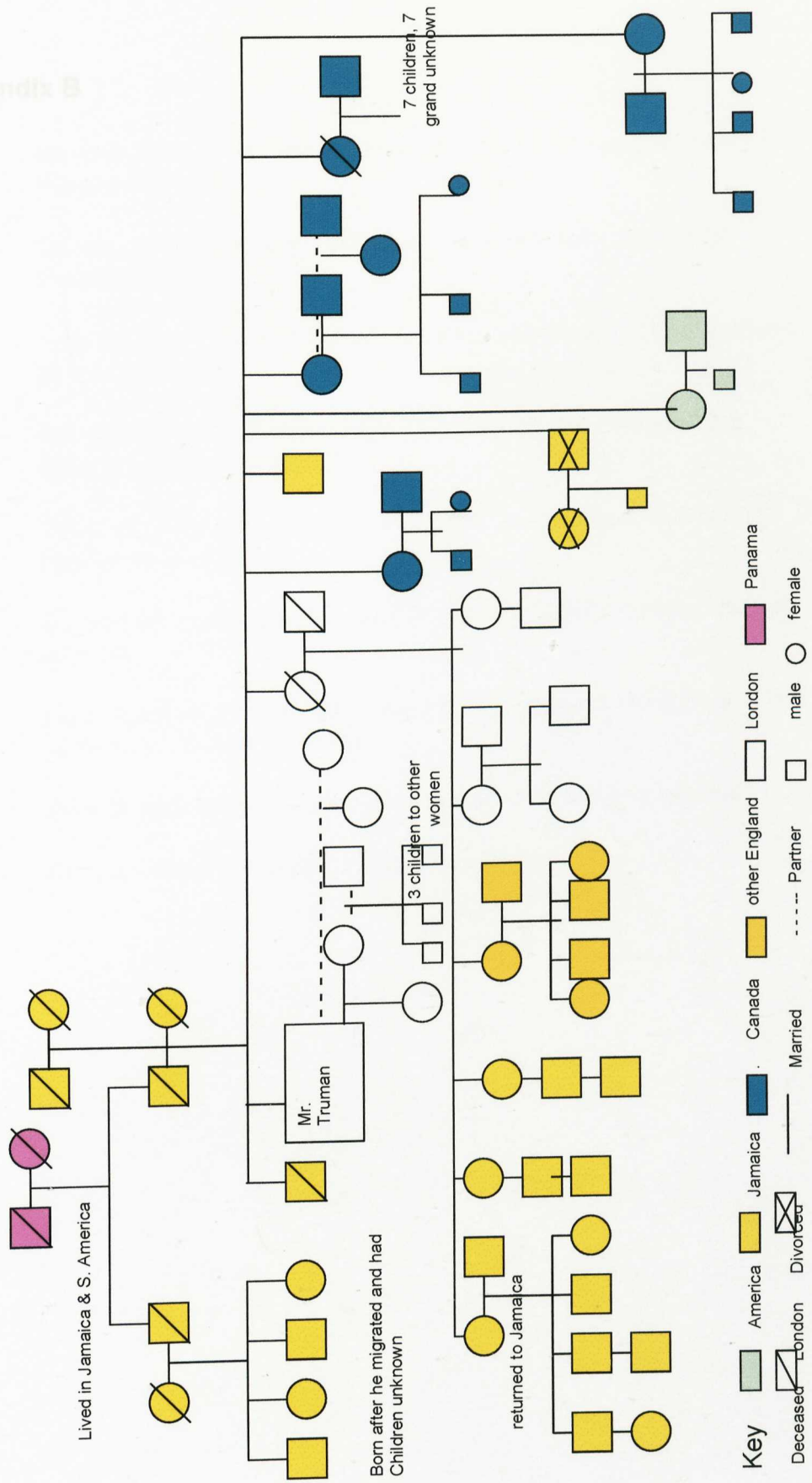


**Key**  
 London Deceased London Jamaica London London  
 Divorced Married Partner Extra-marital affair  
 male female

Appendix B

Mr. Truman

Figure Q



**Key**  
 America (pink square) Jamaica (yellow square) Canada (blue square) other England (white square) London (white square) Panama (pink square)  
 Deceased (diagonal line) Divorced (X) Married (solid line) Partner (dashed line) male (square) female (circle)



## **Appendix B**

## **Carer**

1. What is your role at the scheme, do you have specific duties? Please describe.
2. Do you encounter any difficulties in dealing with the tasks? Please explain.
3. How do you work with the scheme managers and other workers at the scheme?
4. Do you meet the families? Do you discuss the needs of the elderly person with them?
5. What skills do you need for your job? Do you receive training? Please describe.
6. Do you encounter any problems with the elderly people, please explain.
7. How much do you get involved with the clients? Do they ask you to do other things for them?
8. Who is your manager and what supervision do you receive?
9. Do the clients complain, please describe?

## **Questionnaire for service providers regarding gender**

1. The sheltered housing scheme caters for both female and male occupants, does the mixing of the genders raise specific problems in relation to:-
  - Filling voids. Is there a desired quota for a gender mix? If so what is this and why is it in place?
  - Are there more female than male applicants?
  - Do a lot of people decide not to move in once they realise what the scheme is all about?
  - Are female or male residents more problematic? What things are problematic and why?
2. Are female or male applicants more likely to be in need of basic shelter due to:-
  - Being actually homeless
  - Threatened with homelessness
  - Housed but in unsuitable accommodation. What are the circumstances?
3. Are there many tenancy disputes? What are they likely to be about?
4. Are there tenancy disputes related to gender arguments/disagreements?
5. Are there problems with neglect among females and males who live in the scheme?
6. Are there cases of isolation, are they found more with the female or male residents?
7. Are there issues of violence/legal problems involving the police or the law generally?
8. Are female or males more connected to the services provided, e.g. scheme manager, Cleaners, Carers?
9. Are there any gender specific service provisions? What are they and why are they there?

## **Housing Officer**

1. You are a Supported Housing Officer:
  - What does your job entail
  - What policies/law guides your job
  - What assessments do you have to do?
  - Are there forms to be filled in regarding the scheme, e.g. evaluations, arrears monitoring, void control
  
2. Working with the tenants:
  - Do the tenants understand your job involvement with them and the scheme?
  - Are there problems in the provision of the service at the scheme?
  - Is there any race specific element to your role?
  - Are there difficulties working with the West Indian elder, describe?
  
3. Dealing with bureaucracy/hierarchy/co-ordinated working
  - Are you involved in joint meetings/committees regarding the residents/scheme? What is your role? Any issues?
  
4. Are there different issues working with the elderly than with younger residents?

May I have a copy of your job description?

Policy and guidelines

Relevant information used with tenants, e.g. housing benefit form, tenancy application form etc.

Ethnic monitoring form

Organisation chart

## **Elderly People**

### **Recreation**

1. I visit social clubs in the community, these are .....
2. I attend clubs run by the church .....
3. I do voluntary work ..... this is .....

I work ... my work is .....

Why do you work?

### **4. Friends**

I like to go out and visit friends. .... I do this every week.....

We go to Bingo ..... shopping.....  
Dominoes.....church.....etc.....

I phone my friends abroad regularly .....

I write to my friends members regularly .....

### **5. Family**

I see my family members regularly, Yes, No. We get together to do .....

I phone my family members abroad regularly .....

I write to my family members abroad regularly .....

e-mail?

I receive money from my family, who, how often.....

I give my family money  
.....regularly.....sometimes.....never.....

I travel abroad regularly to see my family members .....

My family abroad regularly come to visit me .....

I travel to visit my family abroad every .....

## 6 Important contributions

I am an elderly person and I believe that I have a lot to give to

Friends

Family

The community

What do you think being elderly means to you.....good/bad things ....

How do you think the community see elderly people.....

## 7 Health

Are you in good health ..... What illnesses do you have?

How do you get to your doctor, dentist, hospital appointments?

Have you ever used the red alarm cord in your flat?

Do you drive?

Do you find it easy to walk around or get on public transport?

Are you afraid of going out at night, or in the day?

Have you been the victim of crime?

What areas do you travel to? What is the purpose of going there?

8. As an older person I believe we are respected/not respected by younger people, the environment.....

Do you feel safe as an older person in your home and in the street  
.....

9 Do you find the social security or benefits system confusing? What are the problems? How do you get help? Are forms complicated/confusing/

Pension, Housing Benefit, social services assessments, carers.

10. Help

If I need help I ask

11. Family

Scheme manager

Church

Age concern

No one. But I remain scared, unsure, less confident? Don't care?

Pension

12. Do you get a state pension? How much is it?

Do you get a pension from work?

Is this pension between £50 - £100 a month, £100-150 a month, £150-200 a month, £200-£250 a month, or more.

Do you think you get enough money to live on? Do you think you need more money to live on?

What would you like to do if you had more money?

11. How do you rate the service you get in this housing project? What do you need them to do for you? Do you feel your needs are being met? What are the problems here?

12. Do you enjoy the meetings that Lambeth asks you to attend and give your ideas about the services that you receive in this project?

Do you feel that you have something to say to them?

Do you think they listen to you and do as you ask and need?

13. Back home

Do you want to live back home in Jamaica or will you stay in England or in this housing scheme?

Why?



## **Allied Care Manager**

1. How are you alerted of the need for services from the elderly people at the sheltered housing scheme?

2. What are the typical services requested?

Domiciliary care services are provided such as personal care. What criteria does one need to fulfil to receive the service? Do you have an assessment process? Please describe.

3. Please describe the assessment of the client and the process to provide the appropriate carer.

4. Are there any issues with the implementation of the assessment process?

5. How do you engage with the sheltered scheme managers as part of the co-ordinated working approach and are there any issues, please describe.

6. Are there any cultural specifications required in the service delivery, please explain them and any issues that arise.

7. Do you consider gender in the provision of the carer? Are there any gender issues? Please describe.

8. How do you ensure the service is delivered well, how is the service monitored?

9. What training/qualifications are required of the carer? How are they managed, please describe.

10. Are there any issues in providing the service? Do you have complaints from the elderly people? Please describe. If so how are they resolved?

11. What is the organisation structure and ethos behind the service delivery and the equal opportunities/diversity policies?

12. Are there any financial constraints to service delivery? Please describe.

## **Brokerage**

1. How are you involved in the process in meeting of the need for a service from the elderly people at the sheltered housing scheme?
2. What are the typical services requested? Please describe.
3. You engage service providers such as allied care, please describe this process.
4. How are the services commissioned by them? Are there any financial constraints to service delivery? Please describe.
5. Are there any issues with the implementation of the contract, if so how are they resolved, please describe.
6. Are there any issues in providing the service? Do you have complaints from the elderly people or from the service providers, please describe. If so how are they resolved?
7. Are there any cultural specifications required in the service delivery, please explain them and any issues that arise.
7. Do you consider gender in the provision of the service? In what way? Please describe.
8. How do you ensure the service is delivered well, how is the service monitored?
9. What is the organisation structure and ethos behind your service? Are there equal opportunities/diversity policies?

## **Area Manager**

### *Skills and abilities*

1. Are there any specific qualifications and skills requested to perform this role? Please explain what they are.

- Why are they necessary?

### *Organisation and structure*

2. What is the management structure that you work within to provide management of the sheltered housing scheme, please describe it.

- Please describe the difficulties encountered with this structure.

3. Please describe the benefits of this structure to:-

- The client group, residents
- Scheme Managers

4. BME

a. The sheltered Housing Scheme is a scheme for black elderly people why did this scheme develop for this specific client group?

b. What are the benefits if this specific service provision?

c. What are the difficulties of this specific service provision?

d. How do you ensure that the service is meeting the needs of the black elderly client group?

- Health
- Social
- Emotional
- Increasing additional needs
- Accommodation needs as health and social areas of their lives change

5. *Elderly*

a.. Please describe the service provided to the elderly client who enters the scheme?

6. What are the main concerns of this elderly group that 'pushes the boundaries' of your service provision? Needing more or less from the service than the service provides?

- Are there requests to help go back to live in the West Indies?

7. Do people return from the West Indies to live in England needing accommodation in the scheme?

8. Do people live some time in the scheme and regularly return to the West Indies for substantial periods?

- How is this allowed, policy/law?
- In practice how is this organised?

Does this cause any strategic/management issues?

9. *Liaison with other services*

- Are there Forums that you are required to engage with to develop the service? Please describe.
- Do you input into the strategic development of the service with other workers, please describe this/these process (s).
- Social services
- housing

10. *Issues in Managing the service Provision*

a. Who provides you with management, support and guidance to ensure the service is managed and developed? Is this OK?

b. Are there issues in managing the staff and the service given the scheme managers live on site and this may affect professional 'boundaries'.

c. How do you ensure the service provision continues to meet the needs of the client.

## **Cleaner**

1. What is your role at the scheme, do you have specific duties? Please describe.
  
2. Do you encounter any difficulties in dealing with the cleaning tasks? Please explain.
  
3. How do you work with the scheme managers and other workers at the scheme?
  
4. What skills do you need for your job? Do you receive training? Please describe.
  
5. Do you encounter any problems with the elderly people, please explain.
  
6. How much do you get involved with the tenants? Do they ask you to do other things for them?
  
7. Who is your manager and what supervision do you receive?

## **Day Centre Manager**

1. Are there any specific requirements to work at this centre? please describe. How is this service organised and managed?

What is the purpose of the day centre facility for the elderly?

- 2 Who can attend the day centre? Age, colour, ethnicity, health, religion etc.?

- 3 Are people assessed to use the day centre, by whom. Are you involved in this process?

- 4 What activities take place at the centre, do you have a timetable?

- 5 How do the users get to the centre, transport?

- 6 Do you go out on activities? Trips.

- 7 Do you meet with other professionals regarding the elderly people? What happens in emergencies?

- 8 Do you have a user group?

- 9 What specific requirements do the West Indian elderly people ask for that is specific to their cultural needs?

- 10 Are there any issues in providing the service for this client group? E.g racism, cultural needs, or issues between the users.

## **Handyman**

1. What is your role at the scheme, do you have specific duties? Please describe.
2. Do you encounter any difficulties in dealing with the repairs and maintenance of the scheme? Please describe?
3. How do you work with the scheme managers?
4. How do you work with the repairs team? Please describe.
5. Who is your manager and what supervision do you receive?
6. What skills do you need for your job? Do you receive training? Please describe.
7. Do you find it easy to deal with the elderly people or do you encounter any problems with the elderly people. Please explain.

## **Scheme Manager**

### *Job*

#### **1. Qualifications/Training/ Race/Culture**

The scheme is for Black elderly people from the Caribbean, are there specific qualifications or training required to undertake the post?

- Would all black people be entitled to enter or those from the Caribbean only?
- Were you recruited to the post specifically as a Black Woman of Caribbean origin?

### *Job remit*

#### **2. What is the remit of the Scheme Manager? Please describe job responsibilities.**

- Management of the building /communal area/flats. Guest Flat

What does this entail? How do you work within this area and with other workers who have responsibility for the building, maintenance/repair? How does the local handyman fit in to this?

- Working with the residents one to one/Care Planning

What does this entail? What process do you use for the care Plan, are there Proformas? Are the care Plans specific for the scheme and residents or general?

Please describe difficulties and successes in the care planning and the review process with residents?

Is there resistance from the residents concerning the care plans?

- Working with communal facilities and the residents

Are you responsible for organising communal events? The Coffee morning is one event, what are others? Please describe difficulties in the planning and implementation?

#### **3. *Job remit thoughts***

You are an employee so I suppose there are 'professional boundaries' between you and the residents, is this difficult to maintain, always working strictly 'in role'?



What challenges this, do you have examples?

*Co-ordinated working/colleagues*

4. Working with people is challenging. What support mechanisms do you have in your job?

5. Do you have the responsibility to ensure all the services coming into the scheme are running ok? Please describe your input and any difficulties and successful situations.

Are there issues concerning the race/cultural slant at the scheme as opposed to 'mainstream' schemes. Please describe them.

Are they supervisory – as a black worker managing a black specific scheme, or related to the ethos of the project or service delivery or as an issue regarding the services that attend to the residents needs in the scheme.

### *Monitoring*

6. Do you have to perform any appraisal tasks concerning the operation of the scheme?

- Reports
- Annual return forms

### *Residents*

7. Are there particular issues that arise with the residents because they are black West Indian?

Do you think the residents have unmet needs, Please describe?

Do you think residents neatly fit into the scheme criteria, or are there issues of being more in need of care and support than the scheme provides?

Do some residents want to leave the scheme, what are some general concerns/needs that facilitate this request. Do you always agree, please comment why or you agree or why not if this is the case?

## **Social Work Manager**

1. How are you alerted of the need for this service from the elderly people at the sheltered housing scheme?

2. What are the typical services requested?

What criteria does one need to fulfil to receive the service? Do you have an assessment process? Please describe.

3. Are there any issues with the implementation of the assessment process? Please describe.

4. How do you engage with the scheme managers as part of the co-ordinated service provision? Please describe?

4. Who actually provides the services in their home? Please describe these.

5. Are there any issues in providing the service? Do you have complaints from the elderly people? Please describe. If so how are they resolved?

6. Are there any cultural specifications required in the service delivery, please explain them and any issues that arise.

7. What is the organisation structure and ethos behind the service delivery and the equal opportunities/diversity policies?

## **Supporting People Team**

1. What is the Supporting People strategy? What is the aim and ethos? Please explain.
2. How is the support service funded at the scheme?
3. What is the concept of joint working and service standardisation? Please explain.
4. How is the service structured, managed, delivered? Please describe each part.
5. How is the contract monitored?
6. Do you consult with the service users? What is the process and are any problems encountered? Please describe.
7. What is your working connection with MHT and other service providers at the scheme? Please describe.
8. Please describe your service and organisation structure.

## **Appendix C**

# **LAMBETH SUPPORTING PEOPLE**

## **BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC STRATEGY<sup>1</sup>**

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With Salford Local Authority permission and help, we have extensively used the national research evidence, and the discussion in their paper 'Moving Beyond One Size Fits All' on the future direction for strategically planning for the housing support needs of BME groups

The ethnic diversity of our cities is continuously changing, and there is evidence of extensive need for local authority services amongst black and minority ethnic BME communities.

National studies suggest that many BME groups are highly disadvantaged, and experience high levels of poverty, unemployment, poor housing, ill health, crime and racial discrimination.

**1. Key Priorities: making a difference**

The Supporting People strategy objectives of investing resources targeted to local needs, and increasing fair access, will be met for the BME community through improvements in:

- Effective consultation mechanisms
- Accurate and inclusive information
- Culturally appropriate services



## 1.1 Inclusion and Information

Lambeth SP will ensure there is clear local information on the housing-related support needs of BME communities, and will involve users in identifying local needs.

Best quality data starts at the frontline. The Support, Needs, Assessment and Placement (SNAP) team will provide the basis for local information collection, and we will continuously update the ways we collect data. SP data collection will conform to local procedure and national legislation.

We will work with users, stakeholders and partners to develop best practice monitoring processes.<sup>2</sup> This includes:

- developing a profile of BME communities participating in consultation activities, compared with the profile of the community as a whole, and comparing rates of participation by different ethnic groups
- BME monitoring data that is comprehensive and consistent, and conforms to CRE standards.

## 1.2 Identity and the Individual

The BME label shares the same problems as labels such as 'Asian', in that it can disguise the diversity within groups. Ethnicity is complex, the Office of National Statistics notes in a commentary to the 2001 Census,

'The subjective multi-faceted and changing nature of ethnic identification makes it difficult to collect. With no consensus on what constitutes an 'ethnic group' and membership being subjectively meaningful to the person concerned – the terminology used to describe ethnic group has changed enormously. Basing ethnic identification on an objective and rigid classification isn't achievable.'

## 1.3 Lambeth's BME population

Presently figures based on the 2001 Census, ONS suggest that, White groups make up 62.4% of the total population, and BME groups 37.6%, of which:

- White Groups include: White British 49%; White Irish 3.3%, and White Other 9.6%

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<sup>2</sup> Blackaby and Chahal, *Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies*, Chartered Institute of Housing, 2000

- Black Groups total 25.8% (Black Caribbean 12.1%, Black African 11.6%, Other Black 2.1%); Asian groups make up 4.6%; Chinese/Other 4.8%; and Mixed Ethnic 2.4% of the total population.

Anecdotally Lambeth has one of the largest BME communities outside of Portugal. For in depth diversity analysis, see appendix 1.

#### **1.4 Research on priorities for housing and support needs of BME communities**

There is over-representation of BME users, and groups of BME users in all the client group needs areas in services for older people, mental health, HIV/Aids, offenders, and at risk or offending, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, learning disabilities either now, or predicted in the future.<sup>3</sup>

Existing research shows the priorities below for developing strategic commissioning and delivery of improved housing support to the BME community:

##### **1.4.1 Developing knowledge, awareness and competence in service delivery**

- Removal of stereotypical assumptions about BME communities and about how services are best provided. For example in a report on BME demand for housing support services for Older People by London Borough of Southwark, it was reported that African-Caribbean non-users looked to mainstream sheltered accommodation for future housing support, rather than culturally specific schemes. Vietnamese-Chinese elders looked to family for their immediate support.<sup>4</sup> This report gave evidence of demand for floating support to enable independence in the home especially in the private sector.
- Knowledgeable and sympathetic support workers & carers, providing culturally and personally appropriate services, in specialist services and in mainstream services to meet specific requirements of diet, culture, language and religion, and mutual support

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<sup>3</sup> Lambeth Supporting People Needs Analysis 2004

<sup>4</sup> Southwark Borough Council: Supported Housing Needs of Older People Views of BME stakeholders 2003



#### 1.4.2 Improving access to appropriate services for health, housing and support

- Improving access to services, for example property adaptations
- Provision of separate supported housing for women is appropriate for some BME groups. Lambeth has high provision of BME refuges, needs mapping will clarify whether there is demand for more mainstream provision in the longer term.
- Recognition of barriers to BME women accessing housing support services in relation to 'reputation', financial dependency, language, perceptions of housing support, and fear of racism.
- Development of responses to isolation, insecurity, fear, and complex needs experienced by refugees, through outreach, mutual support, and co-ordination of services.

## 2. BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC NEEDS MAPPING

2.1 The ODPM publication Policy into Practice acknowledges the importance of a clear definition of needs and costs in relation to delivering housing support services to the BME community:

- 'There are physical and mental health issues, that in combination with other factors contribute to a failure to provide services either at all, or services that address the specific needs of black and minority ethnic older people.
- Provision of services that will meet these objectives may have costs that are different to the average national costs e.g: in relation to diversity of language requiring additional training or interpreter costs; critical mass of service provision, e.g. small specialist units; and staffing costs.'

2.2 One of the four core objectives of the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework is the promotion of fair access, diversity and inclusion, with performance objectives to ensure that providers of housing support have a framework for delivering services effectively to the BME community.<sup>5</sup>

2.3 Supporting People has carried out a Needs Analysis<sup>6</sup>, a Race Equality

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the core objective on diversity, see the Lambeth internet Race Equality Action Plan the Supporting People page on, [www.lambeth.gov.uk/supportingpeople](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/supportingpeople)

<sup>6</sup> Lambeth Supporting People Needs Analysis 2004

Impact Assessment<sup>7</sup> and Consultation for the 5 Year Strategy of the four headline groups of Older People, People with Mental Health issues, People with Learning Difficulties and Homeless people.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Future research & gap analysis

There is more research required for BME needs across the whole of the Supporting People programme, collating local information and promoting pan London and regional responses to gaps in service provision. In the following areas in particular the Lambeth Supporting People Needs Analysis January 2004, and the Lambeth Supporting People Race Equality Impact Assessment prioritised further research on BME needs for:

- Homelessness, rough sleeping, drug and alcohol abuse
- Care leavers, teenage pregnancy and women escaping domestic violence

## 2.3 Consultation, information and engagement

To perform well under Best Value and Corporate Performance Assessment inspection, audit inspection of the Supporting People programme in October 2006, and to bid effectively for government regeneration initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Lambeth must show that it is strengthening the Local Authority community leadership role by:

- Talking to people about local services, involving all sections of the wider community, especially those smaller groups who remain untouched by consultation initiatives
- Recognising the barriers to effective participation that exist between institutions and BME communities, and developing methods of involving local people in a variety of ways

### 2.3.1 Supporting People has mapped services in Lambeth and found that the conclusions reached by national studies are mirrored locally, there is:

- A lack of knowledge about services among vulnerable groups in the BME population
- Ethnic record keeping and monitoring is poor in most services. There is no level of expected need against which to make comparisons, e.g. there is continuing resistance among providers to recognise the distinctiveness of the 'Irish' experience' in accessing services<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lambeth Supporting People Shadow Strategy Race Equality Impact Assessment 2003

<sup>8</sup> Lambeth Supporting People User Engagement Strategy 2004

<sup>9</sup> 'Still Beyond the Pale' July, The Response of Social Landlords to the Housing and Related Needs of London's Irish Community Helen Cope 2001

**2.3.2** A report on consultation methods by Sodhi, D & Lekhi, R (2002) found that while more attempts to consult with BME users are being made, existing methods were often inadequate:

- The over-use of postal surveys which are not always appropriate for all groups and subjects
- Few organisations take steps to ensure that BME people are adequately included in consultation samples, and few samples results are analysed by ethnicity
- Many agencies had a plethora of participation structures but there was little attempt made to ensure that these involved BME communities

## **2.4 Asking BME communities, & best practice on consultation and involvement**

The report by Sodhi & Lekhi found that BME communities are keen to be involved in consultation but not necessarily through formal structures.

Where, when and how do BME groups wish to be communicated with? We will evolve methods that take into account the different circumstances of: established and newly arrived communities men and women<sup>10</sup>; the Life Event perspectives of different age groups, e.g. BME elders and youth; and religious and cultural perspectives. These methods will include collecting users views through:

- Questionnaires & feedback from advocacy schemes
- Forums on specific issues or for specific groups
- Quality assurance circles
- Interviews with all new services users
- Complaints and comments processes
- Collation of information from assessment records

## **2.5 Doing what works –engaging and consulting with BME groups**

Organisations must continually improve engagement and consultation reviewing existing good practice and developing new methods of engagement, for example through:

- Focus groups, recruitment of ethnic specific community development workers, and capacity building in the community

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Commission for Racial Equality 'Discrimination & the Irish Community in Britain' 1997

<sup>10</sup> The 1999 national registered social landlord tenant survey data found that black women were the group who showed the highest interest in becoming involved in consultation. Black men had the lowest interest.

through lay assessors<sup>11</sup>. Consultation is only the first stage of engagement, empowering BME groups to take advantage of consultation is an important second stage.

- Neighbourhood conferences, community surveys (carried out by BME people in their own communities) and the development of separate participatory structures enabling participation in the community rather than the council office.
- Agencies must begin to target the specialist BME media, community groups and forums and places of worship in order to disseminate information about services and service development.
- First contact is of utmost importance and must practically demonstrate the organizations aspiration to learn and adapt, not just to data trawl.
- Organisations should develop training for staff regarding the cultural background and implications of any work which might be undertaken for BME communities.
- Redefining education and training, so that learning and engagement can become symbiotic partners.
- Organisations should avoid working only with groups 'in the system'. This might mean by-passing 'representatives' to reach 'minorities within minorities'.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.6 Monitoring of BME participation and data on BME services**

**2.6.1** Supporting People has prioritised developing a good basis for local information collection on needs, through the Housing Support Needs Assessment and Placement SNAP team, and we will continuously update data collection methodology.

Best quality data starts at the 'front-line'. Those providing it and those collecting it need to feel reassured that providing data is not 'harmful' or a potential threat. This, however, is problematic in groups who are marginalized and alienated and for whom data collection is not value-neutral; it is part of a political process. Supporting People data collection will conform with local procedure and national legislation.

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<sup>11</sup> Tomlins et al (2002) in a study of the Vietnamese community in London used what they describe as a 'social action approach', which entailed working with existing community workers to conduct the research. In the project, the community groups were paid to undertake research training prior to facilitating focus groups and producing focus group reports (for which they were also paid).

<sup>12</sup> Focus Housing Group had problems recruiting members of the Bangladeshi community into tenant participation. They approached a local community centre and facilitators were able to attend a sewing circle which became a forum for meeting Bangladeshi women.

**2.6.2** Agencies and local authorities should also develop monitoring processes to increase involvement and ensure that strategies are working.<sup>13</sup> These include:

- Developing a profile of BME communities participating in consultation activities compared with the profile of the community as a whole, and comparing of rates of participation by different ethnic groups
- Comparisons between the views of various ethnic groups about involvement
- BME monitoring data is that is comprehensive and consistent, and conforms with CRE standards
- BME data must include the language of participants to be of use for planning culturally appropriate services

**2.6.3** To discover what constitutes an appropriate consultation for BME communities in the planning and development of housing and support services Supporting People will develop best practice with providers on:

- How BME status is recorded, and how data is categorised
- Are language and cultural needs recorded?
- Is there a specific BME focus in supported housing and in tenant participation?
- What evidence of BME supported housing needs have been discovered?
- Are unmet needs recorded according to ethnicity?

## **2.7 Development of inclusion and communication**

The Supporting People User Network is an engine for change in engagement of providers and users, and for benchmarking best practice in inclusion and communication. Organisations must evaluate the issues of how to engage users and the best methods of addressing them:

- In supported housing, language is of paramount importance, for example for assessing needs or health status, or to help maintain social contacts. Independent translation services provide objectivity and privacy.
- Staff training in equal opportunities and recognising diversity is critical. Culturally specific information on service delivery should be collected. Organisations should begin new encounters with groups and new cultures by going to social gatherings and by engaging with men and women alike

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<sup>13</sup> Blackaby and Chahal (2000)

- Many organisations have the resources to promote participation and consultation (diversity officers, funding for research etc.) but as a provider pointed out, 'agencies must look outside the 'resource window' and explore how they can engage on a small scale'.
- It is necessary for BME groups to perceive services as 'approachable'. If agencies are to understand diversity in a wider context, they must remove the notion of 'same services for all', and replace it with a perspective, which provides different services for different needs, in order to provide the same level of service.
- The business case for diversity must be recognised and led from the top of organisations. There is often a fragmented approach to integrating business planning, Race Equality Action Plans, and BME strategy. Action plans must have responsibilities assigned to senior officers, targets, milestones, and monitoring.<sup>14</sup>

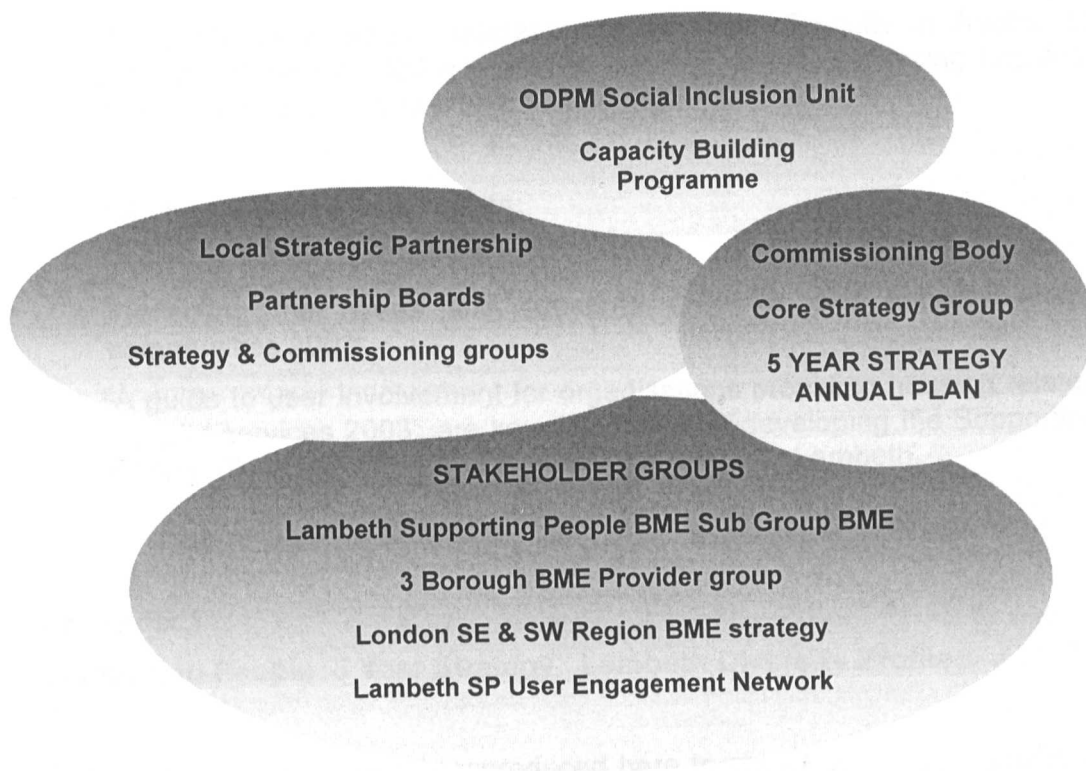
### 3. SUPPORTING PEOPLE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC 5 YEAR STRATEGY – KEY PRIORITIES 2009

We will:

- Involve the BME community as the key stakeholder in developing our BME strategy for mainstream and specialist services
- Ensure that the diversity business case is driven from the top of organisations
- Develop effective local consultation mechanisms and robust information sources on need
- Develop benchmarks from national research where we have gaps in information on needs
- Develop culturally appropriate services that diverse BME communities will want to use
- Drive an improvement agenda on equal opportunities in Supporting People services
- Develop a diverse, work force with the competencies for delivering culturally specific Supporting People services

3.1 Supporting People is committed to ensuring stakeholder involvement in the 5 Year Strategy and Annual Plan. There is an Supporting People BME sub group, a three borough BME provider group including Lambeth Lewisham & Southwark, which both meet quarterly, and BME SE & SW London regional strategy in development. BME strategy within the 5 Year Strategy will be developed through these groups, the User Network and the User Engagement Strategy.

<sup>14</sup> The Audit Commission Diversity Scheme Building an Inclusive Organisation 2002



### 3.2 Legislation, policy and performance

Housing and support providers are required to address inequalities experienced by BME groups, key legislative and policy documents are:

The Report of the Lawrence Inquiry 1999

The development of Supporting People 1998

The Race Relation Amendment Act 2000, which placed enforceable duties on housing providers to promote racial equality

The Race and Housing Challenge Report 2000, requiring housing providers to strive for continuous improvement in race equality work

The Housing Policy Statement 2000 and the Urban White paper 2000, call on providers to provide equality of opportunity within mission statements

The Commission for Racial Equality 1991 Code of Practice in Rented Housing sets down the obligations on providers for strategies incorporating best practice

The Audit Commission Best Value Performance Indicators, requiring evidence of adherence to the CRE code of practice, and new indicators to measure BME group's satisfaction with consultation opportunities

The Housing Corporation Review of Performance Standards 2001 requires housing associations to provide annual improvement plans

The National Housing Federation report Race Equality in Access to Housing Services 1998 on meeting housing needs, accessing housing, tenant participation and ethnic monitoring.

### **ODPM guidance documents:**

'Reflecting the needs and concerns of black and minority ethnic communities 2002'

'A guide to user involvement for organisations providing housing related support services 2003', are key documents in developing the Supporting People Black and Minority Ethnic BME strategy in Lambeth.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Supporting People 5 Year Strategy Lambeth Diversity Profile**

Section 3.2 of the strategy is reproduced here to show the diversity profile of the Lambeth population.

See also the following sections of the strategy:

- 3.1 Population
- 3.3 Housing and Household Composition
- 3.4 Multiple Deprivation in Lambeth

Lambeth SP 5 Year Strategy can be found on the council website Supporting People page [www.lambeth.gov.uk/supportingpeople](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/supportingpeople)

There is a 3 page summary of the SP BME Strategy within the 5 Year Strategy.

### **3.2 Diversity**

Lambeth is a very diverse borough. White British people making up 49% of Lambeth's population. Black groups total 26% of the population, compared to an average of 16% in Inner London. This is made up of Black Caribbean (12% of total population), Black African (12%), and Other Black (2%). Asian people make up 5% of the population, but this level is much lower in comparison with other outer London boroughs.

Different groups tend to be clustered in certain areas within the borough. For example, White British people are concentrated around the Clapham, Streatham and Norwood town centres. Black African people are more likely to live in Brixton, Stockwell and North Lambeth, whilst a higher number of Black Caribbean people are living in the wards around Brixton, especially Vassall and Coldharbour.



Anecdotally, Lambeth has the largest Portuguese community outside of Portugal; however, it is difficult to determine exact numbers as Census data reports this group in the 'White Other' ethnic category.

The Black African population has the largest growth rate compared with any other ethnic group in the borough from 1991–2001 (6% to 12%). Conversely, the percentage of White people resident in Lambeth has decreased from 70% in 1991 to 62% in 2001 – a reduction of 7%. This is similarly the case in comparisons with London as a whole.

The proportion of BME residents in the borough will increase noticeably over the next 10 years, particularly in the adults and older persons age groups.

Homelessness trends for Lambeth for 2003/04 indicate that BME groups accounted for 73% of homelessness decisions made in 2003/04. This is considered a significant number, given that BME groups accounted for 38% of the borough's population during the same period.

SP Client Records for Lambeth show White British (46%) as the most represented client group. However, there are more Black Caribbean service users in Lambeth (16%) compared to London (12%), whilst Black African service users in Lambeth (11%) are fewer in comparison to London (15%).

For people fleeing unrest in their home countries, Lambeth has a disproportionately high level of asylum seekers in comparison with other London boroughs.

## **Appendix 2**

### **EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS**

SP 5 Year Strategy development will reflect the impact of recent and forthcoming legislation and government policies on equalities and human rights, in particular:

#### **1. The Government White Paper Fairness For All: A New Commission For Equalities and Human Rights July 2004**

The White Paper contains proposals to establish a single equality body named the Commission For Equality and Human Rights (CEHR), that has a role in overseeing the development of a human rights culture. The CEHR will bring together the Commission For Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission, and Equal Opportunities. The new Commission will include disabled commissioners.

It includes a duty on all public bodies to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination between women and men. It will also deal with equality of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, as well as human rights issues.

The CEHR will promote:

- An understanding of the links between various types of discrimination e.g. how pensioner poverty affects women in particular
- The way in which discrimination of any kind affects and demeans all members of society
- The benefits to society of tackling discrimination

The rights proposed are for:

- Race, disability and gender – rights to – employment, education and goods and services
- Faith, sexuality and gender – rights to - employment and vocational training

## **2. Other legislation and policy**

The Disability Discrimination Act and the Age Discrimination legislation will impact on how services are provided and the kind of services provided. The Supporting People programme will develop strategic commissioning of services that reflect these changes.

### **a. Disability Discrimination Act 2005**

Whether it is based on prejudicial treatment or fundamental misunderstanding, discrimination related to a person's disability is unacceptable. The Disability Discrimination Act ensures that in a modern, competitive society, which embraces diversity, all citizens are able to take advantage of the widest possible range of services, facilities and jobs without artificial barriers being placed in their way. Disabled people, in particular, often have to overcome more persistent forms of discrimination than other people.

The Disability Discrimination Act is the next step toward achieving that framework. It builds on important changes already in place. These include:

- Setting up, in April 2000, the Disability Rights Commission as an independent voice for disabled people.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people seeking access to education.
- Bringing into effect, from October 2004, the final phase of Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), which requires service providers to look at making reasonable adjustments to physical barriers.

- Regulations earlier this year which end almost all the current employment and occupational exemptions in the DDA, bringing over 1 million additional small employers and a further 7 million jobs into the scope of the Act.

Furthermore the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 proposes taking forward other new measures that would enhance disabled people's civil rights and break down institutional barriers. It would strengthen existing DDA rights in the definition of disability. It would also introduce a new duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

#### **b. Age Discrimination Legislation**

- In 2004, the Departments of Trade and Industry and Work and Pensions, announced how legislation outlawing age discrimination in the workplace would approach the issue of employers' mandatory retirement ages. Following extensive consultation the Government has concluded that this legislation should:
  - Set a default retirement age of 65, but also create a right for employees to request working beyond a compulsory retirement age, which employers will have a duty to consider
  - Ensure close monitoring of the retirement age provisions so that evidence is available for a formal review of age discrimination five years from implementation
  - Allow employers to objectively justify earlier retirement ages if they can show it is appropriate and necessary.

In 2005, the Department of Trade and Industry will be consulting on draft age legislation covering this and the remaining areas outlawing age discrimination in employment and vocational training as highlighted in last year's *Age Matters* consultation. The legislation is scheduled to come into force on 1 October 2006.

#### **c. Previous equalities legislation**

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations Act 1995 and Amendment Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act

## **Appendix D**

## OUR POLICIES

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

#### *EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY – DELIVERING QUALITY SERVICES TO ALL OUR COMMUNITIES*

*Foreword from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive*

***Lambeth enjoys huge diversity and is home to many different communities. It is one of the greatest strengths of our borough that we need to recognise and support. This statement is about delivering quality services to our communities that recognise and respond to diversity and genuine needs. It is a core part of our basic work and business objectives and not a separate agenda or an add-on. In order to deliver responsive services we need to act consistently with the same values internally and externally. Our values of Fairness, Respect, Excellence, Service and Honesty will underpin our work on promoting equality and diversity. We are committed to eliminating discrimination in service delivery and employment on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, religion, belief or any other grounds. We will also promote equality of opportunity, access and outcome for all our communities.***

***The Council welcomes the new responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 together with the definition of institutional racism\* in the Macpherson report as a sound basis from which to tackle racial discrimination and promote equality and diversity.***

***As we make progress on race equality, we will develop a more comprehensive programme to include the wider equality and diversity issues including the implementation of the equality and diversity standards jointly agreed by the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission.***

***Lambeth Council is committed to our residents and users having an environment free from disadvantage and discrimination on any grounds. We will facilitate a collaborative approach to the development of communities and develop our relationships with the other agencies and interest groups leading to the formulation of a robust and mutually supportive strategy.***

#### INTRODUCTION

***This statement stems from our commitment to valuing customers and staff. We are aware that we do not always provide services that are appropriate to the needs of our diverse community and we positively want to do better. We hope that this statement will be the a building block in this process and give councillors, staff, customers and partner agencies the confidence to open the debate and develop a jointly owned***

**programme of actions. At Lambeth we:**

- **RECOGNISE the diversity of the borough and the challenge to become more inclusive. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry provided a new context for public bodies to guard against racism and discrimination. The work of the Government's Social Exclusion Unit provides a new framework for developing a better understanding of community needs and targeting disadvantage. Two external reviews - by the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) and independent consultants "Race Matters in Lambeth" recommended that the council needs to deliver visible improvements on race equality. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a new duty to mainstream race equality.**
- **RESPECT difference. Everybody wants to be treated with fairness and respect. We are committed to respecting diversity and promoting a common sense of pride and belonging for all residents. We would like to create an environment where there can be an open dialogue about how different types of discrimination can be countered and different needs can be met whilst securing the same outcomes. The council has a responsibility to all communities because of its democratic representative role.**
- **REFLECT diversity both in our work force and our representative bodies. We will take positive steps to involve all sections of the community in the democratic process and reach out to under-represented communities to encourage greater participation in decision-making and voting. We must ensure that the needs and aspirations of all communities are articulated through better representation and the commitment is there to respond positively. We will work with community groups and partners to ensure that equality target groups benefit from regeneration projects. We will ensure that the council workforce adequately reflects the composition of the local community at all levels and that all staff receive training in equalities and diversity.**

**The Council is thus committed to actively recognise, respect and reflect diversity in all the functions of the authority.**

#### **AIMING FOR SUCCESS - Strategy Development**

**We will develop a 3-year strategy with an intention of eliminating discrimination and disadvantage on any grounds including race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.**

**To assist us in developing our strategy we will utilise a number of methods and frameworks that have been devised to help us tackle discrimination and disadvantage.**

**These methods and frameworks include:-**

- **National and local Equalities Targets and Performance Indicators set out in the Lambeth Local Performance Plan 2001 and Performance Digest**

- **Race Equality Action Plans in each directorate contain specific targets for each service (target to reach CRE level 2 by 2002 and compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 by May 2002)**
- **Corporate Equalities Action Plan to in place in December 2001**
- **The Equality Standards devised jointly by the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission**
- **Employment Action Plan in place (target to reach level 3 of CRE Standard for Local Authorities by 2002)**
- **Investors in People Programme to be implemented across the council (by April 2002)**
- **The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council will take personal responsibility for delivering the equalities programme by adopting the CRE Leadership Challenge (2001)**
- **A Best Value Review dedicated to Equality & Diversity (2002)**
- **All Best Value Reviews are required to take account of the equalities implications of decisions at every stage of the review**
- **COMPACT agreed jointly with the voluntary sector outlines targets to improve the capacity of black & minority ethnic voluntary and community groups**
- **Citizen's Panel to consult with all sections of the community to ensure that they have an equal say in all issues that affect their lives**
- **Working in partnership with the community and voluntary sector and other statutory and business agencies to develop a Community Plan (April 2002) to enhance the well being of all sections of the community**
- **Joint programme with the Police to pilot 5 sites for handling hate crime (Target date - 2001/2)**
- **Investment in translation and interpretation (2001-4)**
- **Programme to roll out service monitoring of equality target groups across the council (2002/03)**

#### **WHEN WILL THIS POLICY STATEMENT BE REVIEWED?**

**This is a live policy statement that will be reviewed regularly (at least annually) and change in response to customers' needs and the identification of wider equalities and diversity programme within the Council.**

#### **ENFORCEMENT**

**Every employee is responsible for implementing the policy and principles in their day to day work and this will be monitored through performance management systems with training needs being regularly established and training outcomes undergoing meaningful evaluation. A separate Equal Opportunities Policy exists for Employment issues.**

The Council will ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under the legislative framework and will work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity through policy, service

delivery and employment. This will be monitored through the corporate equalities action planning process. The council will take remedial action where non-compliance is identified.

The Council will invest in developing the expertise and confidence in the organisation to effectively implement this policy.

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\* Macpherson Report – definition of institutional racism

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.



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MAPS:

London underground map  
<http://www.afn.org/~alplatt/tube.html>

Map of the local Brixton area where the scheme is situated  
(Collins Barthollomew 2006), [streetmap.co.uk](http://streetmap.co.uk)

*The negotiation of belonging: An exploration of the roles of kinship and the state among elderly West Indian migrants residing in a sheltered housing scheme in Brixton, London.*

Map of London Boroughs

<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=8600>