Abstract

Most of the anthropological literature (post-war through early 1970s) on Afro-Caribbean family and household organization tended to explain those domestic social formations in terms of the West Indian proclivity to stray from the "ideal" family structure, and is firmly entrenched in structural-functional theory. This paper begins with a critique of the structural-functional school's influence on West Indian household/family studies in which kin and kindred were submerged within the cracks of the domestic unit, because of the emphasis on the nuclear family. And, although women-related issues, such as matrifocality, female-headed households, and fertility patterns, were important topics of the literature, women, per se, were missing from the analysis. The role and status of black women in West Indian societies bore the brunt of criticism for supposed malfunctions in those societies, or were chauvinistically dismissed. Next, the discussion turns to research influenced by feminist perspectives on gender and kinship which includes the role of women in their societies without stigma, and which addresses the issue of the missing kindred by locating them in work sites and in domestic networks of local and international spheres. Topics of the feminist discourse examined include sexual stratification and social inequality, female socioeconomic responsibility, and re-analysis of the concepts of women's independence and autonomy.

My Mother Who Fathered Me and Others: Gender and Kinship in the Caribbean

by

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MY MOTHER WHO FATHERED ME AND OTHERS: GENDER AND KINSHIP IN THE CARIBBEAN

Most of the Post War through early 1970s anthropological and sociological literature on Afro-Caribbean family and household organization tended to explain those domestic social formations in terms of the West Indian proclivity to stray from the "ideal" family structure, that is, the nuclear family. A great deal of print was committed to analyzing the prevalence of female-headed households and other variations in household structures, the double standard in mating relations, the normative experience of extra-marital mating, and the commonplace acceptance of birth outside of wedlock in West Indian societies (e.g., Blake 1961; Clarke 1966; Rodman 1971; M.G. Smith 1962; R.T. Smith 1956). As the titles of most of those works suggest, household composition and family organization were the analytical foci. What was documented as Caribbean or West Indian family organization or household structure was categorized as belonging to the lower class, "negro" or lower class negro segments of those societies, and different from their upperclass counterparts. And specifically because of their class origins, these family forms were also designated as being definitely disorganized in terms of the sense of the "ideal" family. What made this group of people's domestic organization even more fascinating, for many researchers, was the fact that working class/peasant/poor black women centered many critical social, and cultural domains. The sociocultural centrality of women coupled with a "disorganized family form," led researchers to consider that West Indian domestic organization deviated even farther from the "ideal."

Other aspects of Afro-Caribbean domestic organization, such as how kinship and kindred relations were examined, are also reflected in this body of work. Hymie Rubenstein states that (1983:294) "there has been the concentration on the household and concomitant neglect of the kindred." This situation, Rubenstein says, is a product of fieldwork and not the actual role played by these social forms among the people concerned. In short, the narrowed vision of looking for the absent "ideal" family (that is, the nuclear family with its proscribed gender roles in tact), and the searching for reasons for women-centered domains enabled some of the other elements of a kinship system to slip by the critical eye of numerous scholars working in the region. All the while they were looking for the conjugal pair, important kin relations such as non-residential kin, affines, and the sociocultural role of mating itself, became factors referred to, but not topics for, intensive investigation. The absence of a more complete schematized kinship system shortchanged kinship theory-building concerning Afro-Caribbean peoples and peoples of African descent in all parts of the Americas (see Sudarkasa 1980)

The purpose of this paper is to make a contribution to the review of Afro-Caribbean family and kinship research. It is motivated by a comment of Hymie Rubenstein who declared (1987:220) that "the entire ediface of West Indian family studies rests on an inherently unstable foundation." The intention here is not to prove or disprove Rubenstein's comment, but to demonstrate how a focus on gender elucidates kin relations in a way different from the past. Questions asked here are: How did the major school of thought during the late 1940s to the early 1970s hamstring Afro-Caribbean kinship-building? And, what contributions has the post 1970s research on women and gender made to the development of Afro-Caribbean kinship?

The discussion is divided into three sections which cover the questions posed above. First, there is a summary of the critique on the Post War to early 70s data which sheds light on the ways kin and kindred and gender were submerged within the cracks of the household (used as a methodological concept). Next, the discussion turns to recent research influenced by feminist perspectives on gender and how the study of kinship benefits from that type of analysis. Finally, I look at studies involving women, work, and households, which incorporate a wide analytical framework.

Conceptual Definitions

Before I begin the discussion on the history of theoretical premises on Afro-Caribbean family and kinship studies, certain terms and concepts must first be established. Basic to understanding Afro-Caribbean kinship is an understanding of what is considered Afro-Caribbean and what is meant when the term "kinship" is used. For our purposes here, the term Afro-Caribbean, similar to the term West Indian, refers to a cultural/geographical area in the same vein as European, Scandinavian, or Southeast Asian generally describes those peoples, places, and cultures. More specifically, Afro-Caribbean refers to peoples of African descent who constitute the numerical majority of the populations of countries in the circum Caribbean region. The term also applies to the Commonwealth or English-speaking Caribbean, the Netherland Antilles, the overseas departments of France (Guadeloupe and Martinique) and associate states, Haiti, and to a lesser extent the Spanish-speaking Antilles. In some instances, the peoples of African descent residing in coastal Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras are included in the nomenclature. As such, the Afro-Caribbean embraces over thirty coastal and island territories and four European language groups. All of these societies, except for the majority of the black populations in the Central American countries, share the history of plantation America and exhibit the social and economic consequences of that mode of existence.

The islands and coastal rim of the Caribbean were the final destination for about 5 million Africans enslaved from the 16th to 19th centuries. As Franklin Knight notes (1978:87), "given the transportation facilities of the time (1500-1870) this constituted one of the greatist [sic] migrations of modern times." Africans and their descendants in the Americas were the enslaved labor who produced the sugar and other commodities that generated a massive amount of wealth and power among slave owners, stocks and bonds holders, bankers, and European countries. The world of slaves also faciliated the expansion of mercantile capitalism and laid the groundwork for contemporary international flows of trade and capital.

African and creole (descendants) slaves, treated as chattel in the early days of slavery, suffered high mortality rates. Because of the tremendous availability of slaves, the price of replacements was kept low. However, after the British abolished slave trade in 1807, the price of slave replacements increased dramatically. But the treatment of the enslaved population could be categorized slightly as new and improved. Slave revolts, maroonage, and individual acts of active and passive resistance were commonplace throughout the Afro-Caribbean (see Mair 1974; Price 1973).

Over time, these societies developed as unique cultures unto themselves. This process, called creolization, was influenced by the African heritage of the population, the impact of the indigenous Native American groups on the newcomers, and the particular European colonial power in control, or series of powers, as islands often changed hands from one country to another. For example, St. Lucia was first a French colony which was turned over to the British as a prize of an 18th century battle. Social and economic inequality was measured by the status of one's birth, free or non-free, and the color of skin and/or race. Whites, in the minority, were placed at the apex of status and power, while the black majority occupied the powerless, lowest position. An intermediate group--the colored or "mulatto"--from miscegneation between blacks, whites, and perhaps other ethnics, produced a middle stratum. This group played an important role in the construction of Caribbean societies, and their acknowledged position helped differentiate the Caribbean and Latin American racial hierarchies from those found in North America.

After the emanicipation of slaves, beginning with the Haitian revolution in 1810 to the 1870s in Puerto Rico and Cuba, the color/race social hierarchy determined an individual's access to resources, including employment, housing, and education. The black majority, usually illiterate rural proletarians and urban service workers, was disenfranchised. In contrast, the white population, for the most part, was comprised of representatives of the colonial motherland and/or benefited as land and business owners. The colored middle stratum served as agents to the white minority and became a primary source of a country's professional class--physicians, lawyers, teachers, land owners, and so forth. Acts of cultural oppression, carried out by the white and priviledged middle stratum, were invidious acts which abated the racism found in Caribbean societies. In spite of this influence, the African-based cultures which had developed in the community of slaves and intergenerationally passed down to the descendants of slaves, were cultures of resistance to racism and oppression. Strategies of survival and the sociocultural and psychological mechanisms that verified and validated such behavior were tools of the majority.

Nevertheless, in some instances today in the Caribbean, to be black and poor places one in a situation not much changed from the days of slavery. The social hierarchy, critical to the success of European colonialism, has been maintained by the ruling classes, and in contemporary times, by the economic agents of wealth and power. Implied in the term Afro-Caribbean, then, is a recognition of its roots in slavery and its working class urban, peasant, agrarian proletarian, and underclass urban origins. Afro-Caribbean also implies the sociocultural link to an African heritage which makes it different in social, political, and economic ways from its Euro-focused upper class counterparts.

Turning now to the usage of the term kinship, I follow the "blanket" approach suggested by Alan Barnard and Anthony Good (1984:188-89). Kinship relations are defined in a vague and imprecise way, which affords the widest latitude for interpretation and accommodates the historical, sociocultural, political, and economic context in which they are found. Barnard and Good consider relationships pertaining to kinship if they display some of the following characteristics:

1. is ascribed by birth and persists throughout life

2. is initiated by "marriage" (which needs to be defined)

3. is explained or justified in terms of a biological idiom

4. is invested, by its mere existence, with certain expectations regarding conduct of both parties

5. assigns the parties to an "in" group category, in opposition to persons not so assigned

6. involves the use of relationship terms in a reciprocal, systematic way

7. involves members of a single domestic unit of household

8. involves systematic enduring relationships between members of different domestic units of households

9. entails joint ownership or use, and/or the serial inheritance of property and resources

10. serves as a medium for assigning hereditary social positions or offices

11. involves the nurturing and upbringing of small children and

12. involves the making of prestations without expectation of immediate or direct return

This wide angle lens approach to analyzing and understanding the complexities of kinship is most constructive in our attempt to schematize Afro-Caribbean kinship systems in two direct ways. In particular, it will help to show how the Post War boundaries of interpretation limited the scope of kinship analysis, especially in regards to the role of women. And it will help explain how a framework of such action, larger than previously provided, brings other categories of kinship and kindred into the social arena. Also, this approach does not presume any gender-specific role in its construct, or proscriptions of any so-called universal, normative behavior.

Another set of terms needs to be defined here in regards to gender: kinship and households. Nancie Solien Gonzalez's research among the Garifuna, an Afro-Caribbean group from Guatemala, provides one of the best working definitions of the thorny subjects of family and household. For Gonzalez (1970:232)

> ...the family [is] defined as a group of people bound together by the complex set of relationships known as kinship ties, between at least two of whom there exists a conjugal relationship...The household, on the other hand, implies common residence, economic co-operation, and socialization of children. Although the members of the household may be bound by a kinship relationships, no particular type of tie is necessarily characteristic.

Important operational characteristics of both Gonzalez' definitions of family and household, and the outline of kin relations established by Barnard and Good, are that they emphasized variation, elasticity, and flexibility in

the social structures and the associated modes of behavior which are enacted in those social formations.

25 Years Worth of Family Studies

From the middle of the 19th century, the clergy, European colonial bureaucrats, social workers, and the West Indian upper classes bemoaned the "weak family structure" of the masses of their societies. Clearly, an absent father figure in the home was at the root of Afro-Caribbean peoples' impoverished and disenfranchised situation. What else but catastrophe could be expected from such deviant behavior? Therefore, following World War II, when research interests concerning Afro-Caribbean family structure and household organization began to attract many anthropologists and sociologists to the region, they were already influenced by the Eurocentric notion of what constituted a "proper" family structure, emanating from certain sectors of the societies under study as well as perhaps from their own personal biases. Adding further to this situation was the tremendous impact the structural-functional schools had on the course of social science at this time. R.T. Smith (1987:164) explains that "the ideal that the lower-class is deviant was reinforced by another set of shared assumptions, theoretical this time, concerning the functional necessity of a 'nuclear family relationship complex' in all human societies."

Structural-functional theories perceive the interrelationships between individuals and groups of a particular society to be constructed so that they operate to maintain the equilibrium of that society. Certain functions need to be performed so that society continues to exist. Although not all societies are structured in the same way, certain elementary functions of social systems can be expressed and analyzed in identical language. Social relations are analyzed in terms of how they contribute to the maintenance of a social system, and those relations which appear to add only conflict and ambiguity are deemed dysfunctional.

Structural-functional anthropology of the 1950s also emphasized the role of values and norms as mechanisms for social equilibrium. Therein lies one of the weaknesses of the theory. Because values, norms, and actual behavior must be consistent in order to properly function, any variation in those patterns could be dealt with in only one way--dysfunction. The variations from the "norm' which were found then became analytical grist seeking explanations and exceptions to the rule for the structural-functional anthropological mill (see Fortes 1949). That is, diversity was noted as a detraction from a concept of uniformity. The upshot of this approach also made it difficult for the concept of social change to be analyzed in any other terms except dysfunction and/or exceptions to the rule (see Redfield 1949). Certain social factors existed to maintain equilibrium, and any change dislodged that notion of its consistency and undermined the ability of a society to perpetuate itself.

Three major figures in the social science world during the era, Murdock (1949), Parsons (1955), and Fortes (e.g. 1949), declared, in their own ways, the primacy of the nuclear family as the rational functioning family unit which was embued with values, norms, political domains, and rights. Hence, the search for the conjugal pair among Afro-Caribbean domestic groups became the prominent feature in Post War social science works conducted in the

region. This body of data also validated the theoretical premise of the structural-functional school of thought.

Post War research conducted in the English-speaking Caribbean has been the subject of major criticisms over the years (e.g., M.G. Smith 1966; Remy 1971). R.T. Smith (1982), among the scholars of that era, leads the way in reevaluating his own work and that of his peers. More recently, a group of scholars representing all sections of the region, met at the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies for a UNESCO-sponsored, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) conference on "Changing Family Patterns and Women's Role in the Caribbean" (e.g., see Mohammed 1986). But no matter who does the critique, the structural-functional model receives its share of the blame for its role in mystifying Caribbean family forms and household organization and attempting to ignore West Indian women for over 25 years. The following provides brief summaries of examples of that body of research.

According to R.T. Smith (1982:340), researchers from Britain were compelled by the colonial officials to measure "the weakness of family life" by classifying households which would supplement official demographic data on both rates of births outside of wedlock and marriage not legally or religiously sanctioned. Thus began the deluge of family typologies with their descriptive/value ladened titles. For example, a work published in 1946 noted household types in order of preference--Christian families (patriarchal nuclear); Faithful Concubinage (right structure, without proper sanctions, but leading to wedlock); Companionate unions (cohabiting unions of less than three years in durations); and Disintergrate families (units composed of women, children, and grandchildren) (Simey 1946:82-83). Subsequent researchers modified this formula, but the method of listing household membership remained. Edithe Clarke (1966) placed her household types within a community study framework emphasizing the role of the economy in shaping family units. The major contribution of Clarke's ethnography is that hers is the only work of that time to discuss land tenure as a familial consideration. R.T. Smith's (1956) work in British Guiana (now Guyana) formulated a general developmental cycle model within his household membership listing, to note the changing configurations of all household compositions. Social class differentials and their complementary economic consequences played a large part in comparing Afro-Guyanese household structures. M.G. Smith's (1962) comparative study of urban Jamaica, and villages in Grenada and Carriacou, focused on how the role of mating influenced household types. Not only did different mating relationships form different kinds of households, but also different kinds of parenthood emerged. M.G. Smith wholeheartedly agreed with the desirability of a stable nuclear family. He regarded other domestic formations as inherently being filled with socioeconomic problems.

Needless to say, the research conducted on a marriage also followed the structural-functional model. In those works, it was not so much what kind of martial union was ventured into by individuals and why, but why and what prevented people from taking the legal/nuclear family route. Judith Blake's (1961) research of the early 1950s on Jamaica comes to the forefront of discussion on the topic. The problem Blake's work set out to investigate was why Jamaican "lower class" women regarded legal marriage as a norm and morally disapproved of illegitimacy and extra-legal mating, but still had children and mating relations outside of wedlock. There were observable gaps between the expressed "ideals" and actual behavior of the women who answered Blake's

questionnaire. The author argued that unmarried mothers were in poor bargaining positions in the "courtship market" and that they displayed a great deal of hostility to extra-legal unions and bearing children out of wedlock. Subsequent research by Stycos and Back (1964) totally refuted this claim; they continued to search for reasons why legal marriage was not entered into earlier, a factor which would affect the rate of births outside of wedlock in Jamaica's population.

On the whole then, these examples of studies conducted in the region during the Post War time frame, demonstrate the research agenda which was propelled by the theoretical model it followed. Some of the work, applied in nature, attempted to find the cause of the perpetuation of poverty in those societies. Guided by both scientific and unscientific assumptions, the research finding isolated the family as the source of all good and evil. And, because the ideal family sat juxtaposed to female-headed households, common-law unions, and so forth, blame was more easily fixed on the variations in family formations than on the "ideal" family form and the institutions of society which maintained its privileged status. To be more blunt about it, it was easy to blame poor Black women for the consequences of their own predicaments and then not fully analyze those situations because they involved women.

Earlier, reference was made to the role that Caribbean scholars played in this review and restudy of family and kinship in the region. One outstanding example was the Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP), which was a three-year, interdisciplinary comparative research project conducted by a team of predominately feminist scholars representing the University of the West Indies system. Results from that work appear in volumes 3 and 4 of Social and Economic Studies 35. A number of contributors to that project and the SES volume really advanced the study of women, gender, and kinship in the English-speaking Caribbean, as the following two studies exemplify. Erna Brodber's (1986:45) article is a collection of interviews with four 80 year old Black Jamaican women who tell of "the ways men mediate into their lives from the turn of the century to the present." These men were outside of the women's household, but offered them "labour...guidance...and emotional sustenance [which was] considered so important to [the women] that [it] could cure physical illness and provide the opportunity for [their] bodies to make children." Clearly, this interpretation shows how men fit into the lives or women and vice versa without the assumption of impropriety or disorganization. One of Christine Barrow's (1986a:60) contributions to the WICP, her study of men and their perception of women's roles in Barbadian society, readily contributes much toward understanding the contemporary sex role differences in that society. Barrow states that a Barbadian male image of women presents an "ought:is" dichotomy similar to the Euro-Ideal:Afro-Real concept found in the literature on race and class. "The young women of today," argue the men, no longer want to serve their men and submerge their individuality, but are "out fulfilling their own ambitions and desires." The idealized version of the past (that is, women serving men) and the negative view of contemporary womanhood (that is, women with ambitions) indicates the degree to which the men in this sample are threatened by today's women. The perceived female threat challenges these males' ability to control their female partners, an ability important to their manhood (Barrow 1986a:61). One group of men in Barrow's study proposed that the government actively promote "the rights of men" in Barbados. On the whole, however, there was an

uneasiness about the perceived and real role of men and women implicit in the new levels of expectation for each.

Recently, Graham Dunn (1987) conducted a study on men in Barbados which appeared to fill the male portion of the "gender gap" in the literature. This research, however, was handicapped from achieving its objective of providing "the other side," in two significant ways. First, the work wholeheartedly accepts the matriarch/emasculation theory concerning the negative long-term effects on boys reared in women-headed households. Interpreting these findings was a version of structural-functionalism, which categorized variation in household formation as deviant behavior. According to Dunn (1987:171), "women are relegated to the home and church. They must have the meals ready, bear children for their menfolk, and obey them, or else risk being cut off without a cent." There is a significant difference between this work and the scholarship guided by feminist and other analytical models, as discussed in the next section. But the adage, the more things change, the more they remain the same, applies here, especially from within the walls of the academy.

Feminist Anthropology: Gender and Kinship

Given the results of about 25 years of Afro-Caribbean family studies and household organization, when feminist theories started to direct research in the region, much and nothing had been said about women of the English-speaking Caribbean. Although women-related issues--such as matrifocality, female-headed households, and fertility patterns--were important topics of the body of literature at hand, women per se were missing from the analysis. That is, while the research which followed the structural-functional model described forms of the family and household structures and to some degree social class, the roles that women play in culture and society and the relations of gender as they affect social structures were extracted from, or invisible in, the rigorous debate. As stated earlier, without the visible male present in the conjugal pair, what remained were women. And although they as a group of people were analyzed, their "deviant" from the "norm" behavior was the focus of concern, rather than their contributions to the construct of their societies. Furthermore, because women were at the center with men or by themselves in many of the critical social organizations of Caribbean societies, their role and status either bore the brunt of criticism for supposed social malfunctions, or were chauvinistically dismissed.

The following discussion provides some examples of recent anthropological and sociological research guided by feminist theories, which bring the role of women to their rightful positions in the study of kinship and in the analysis of Afro-Caribbean societies at large. In addition to the number of North Americans who have contributed to this corpus of work, Caribbean women scholars have made tremendous inroads in "setting the story straight" on gender and society in their part of the world. Here the discussion focuses on two research themes: the role and status of Afro-Caribbean women, and the study of women and political economy. In both thematic sections, the nuances of kin relations pertaining to women are underscored by the situations in which they are located.

Role and Status of Women

Feminist anthropologists have critically analyzed the antagonism between the "ideal" or "norm" and the tradition cultural systems of the region as they pertain to women and gender relations. Constance Sutton and Susan Makiesky-Barrow (1981:469-498) look at sexual stratification and societal inequality in one Afro-Caribbean Barbadian community; Victoria Durant-Gonzalez (1982:1-21) argues for a conceptual model called "the realm of female responsibility;" and Christine Barrow (1986) reanalyzed female concepts of independence and autonomy. By focusing on these perspectives of Afro-Caribbean women, their roles in kinship relations and the constructs of kinship itself become clearer than those posed in earlier works.

In their article on Barbados, Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow focus on one rural community where both did fieldwork ten to twelve years apart. They discuss the historical background and the contemporary community in terms of five issues: 1) participation of both sexes in family and in domestic activities, 2) the relative autonomy of women and men and the mechanisms by which one achieves status and prestige, 3) the significance attached to motherhood and its influence on women's economic dependence and independence, 4) cultural conceptions of sex roles and identities, and 5) effects of recent changes on the balance of power between sexes (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1981:470). Their findings show that Barbados shares the same interests in capitalism, its mode of production, and its concept of the divisions between domestic and public life as are apparent in Europe and Euro-America. And, such conditions were the source of black Barbadian women's loss of autonomy, public esteem, and dependency on family, unlike that found in the historical community of slaves. However, there still was not the strict replication of sexual inequality in Barbados as found in other "Western" societies. What maintained this duality was a cultural ideology that attributes to women and to men a similar set of positively valued characteristics and abilities and identified parenthood and sex as two highly valued experiences (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1981:496). Furthermore, the basis for women's independence and autonomy suggests a strong sense of interpersonal connectedness in constrast to separateness as might be interpreted in a European sense of the term. Therefore, a combination of factors, such as independent access to resources via a kinship system, the economy, and a cultural ideology, tends to minimize gender differences and emphasize the effectiveness of the individual accounts for a more equal footing between the sexes.

Traditional values pertaining to the importance of motherhood as a dimension in Afro-Caribbean women's roles are as strong today as they were in the days of slavery. Demographers note that the structural features of Caribbean families have been the same for at least 150 years (Roberts and Sinclair 1978). Therefore, any analysis of the role of motherhood cannot be viewed as a single issue of child bearing. That role contains the biological as well as social aspects of domestic responsibilities, socialization, and training of children and other dependents. Similar to other features of these cultures, a sense of equality does exist, especially relative to its European influenced counterparts. But in the household, there is a sharp division of labor. Women perform a disproportionate amount of work and usually carry the enormous responsibility of ensuring the survival of family members (Powell 1984:104). Victoria Durant-Gonzalez (1982:3) calls this set of activities, the "realm of female responsibility." She states that a large proportion of

women in the English-speaking Caribbean are "in charge of producing, providing, controlling, or managing the resources essential to meeting daily needs." The concept of female responsibility also includes a woman "being singly in charge of economic resources and managing a household and its members, sharing responsibilities with a mate and/or relatives, and providing the full range of material and non-material needs of daily life."

One of the deficiencies of the Post War research was its lack of clarification concerning how women and children went about their lives without the input of a man in the house. If women were both mother and economic provider, how did they do it? Moreover, since most Afro-Caribbean women are employed in low paying, low skilled, menial jobs, or are unemployed, how can they fulfill all that is expected of them? Here, the ideological support mechanisms found in the African-based traditional role of women in the Caribbean societies prove to be invaluable cultural assets. Work, no matter how dead-end, has a great deal of meaning to women as they attempt to meet their familial responsibilities. It is also an essential part of a woman's sense of self-image. How a woman exercises options, makes decisions, and establishes her role as both contributor to the household and as a participant in the economic sector are components in the conceptualization of womanhood.

"Independent" is a term often used to describe West Indian women and how they carry out their responsibilities. Christine Barrow's work (1986) analyzed this expression in terms of its merits and limitations in the way it reflects yet obfuscates reality. Barrow (1986:8-9) says that the group of women she worked with in Barbados spoke of independence as a quality which is based on having one's own source of economic support, generally from employment, other income-generating activities, and when possible, savings, while at the same time organizing and utilizing support from others. Autonomy implied exercising options while making decisions for oneself and having control over one's own destiny with no strings attached. Independence, contrary to some thoughts on the subject, was not co-terminus with female autonomy. The chances of economic self-sufficiency were far beyond the means of most to whom the term "independent" has been applied. Rather than acting on behalf of a single person, autonomy implies inter-dependency found among a number of individuals. Autonomy is highly valued, and lifetimes are spent fulfilling obligations to others so as to reinforce that reciprocal support in time of need. Barrow (1986:8) notes: "one is considered foolish to refuse support from those who give, especially if they have a culturally prescribed obligation to do so."

One mechanism used to preserve autonomy is to maintain reciprocal relationships within networks. Research conducted as part of the Women in the Caribbean Project showed that women's networks were not confined to the poor or working class. Dorian Powell (1982) applied a network analysis to a domestic network system involving approximately 40 persons with whom her informant interacted on a daily basis. The respondent, a middle class woman, living in Kingston Jamaica, dealt only with her female kin on a daily basis. Christine Barrow (1986) describes the etiquette of domestic network exchanges such that "independence" or at least the public image of it, is maintained. The most critical characteristic of successful network management is to avoid total dependence on one source of support, particularly a male partner. If a relationship endures over the years, male support tends to become secure. However, it can never be fully relied upon, as at any stage of a marital

union--visiting, common-law, and points in between--the relationship can be temporarily or completely terminated. Therefore, women's control over their lives functions as a degree of economic autonomy which includes the nature of earning, spending, saving, and property ownership and the sexual division, of "money matters." According to Barrow (1986:11) female autonomy is encouraged from an early age and education is emphasized as the means to get a good job. The major lifelong strategy, then, to "cut and contrive" involves female networks which assist mothers, sisters, daughters, and "in-laws" (children's father's female relatives) alongside income-generating activities.

The three anthropologists who work in Barbados agreed that the plantation economy provided both the prerequisites for maintaining female economic autonomy--"full" employment and sexual equality in the relations of production. However, Barrow forcefully argues that in contemporary Barbados the structure of the modern capitalist system fosters high rates of unemployment and sexual inequality. And of course accompanying a capitalist economy are widening schisms between the women on the basis of their social class.

Kinship and Gender

Although not explicitly stated, the recent feminist anthropological scholarship cited above advances Afro-Caribbean kinship study in two ways. First, that work addressed the complex set of roles, expectations, and behavior of women in kin relations. The importance here is that those relationships were rarely viewed in terms of kinship, but rather in terms of domestic activities or not at all. Secondly, when women's relations with kin, as discussed in those works, were seen in terms of a wide ranging system (see Barnard and Good), then Afro-Caribbean kinship moved beyond the confines of the mother-child dyad of biology (domestic) and the legal rules and legitimate authority (public) vested in the "universal" "ideal" nuclear family (see Collier and Yanagisako 1987:4). As Collier and Yanagisako state (1987:6):

> In focusing on women's strategies, feminist scholars did not simply record that the women, like men, have goals and work towards them. Rather, they demonstrated that it is impossible to understand interaction with 'domestic spheres' without simultaneously understanding the organization of political and economic arenas, that provide goals and resources for both sexes."

In the following discussion, characteristics noting roles, expectations, and behavior were gleaned from Barnard and Good's list of twelve. The three categories elucidate the implicit roles of kin relations in the studies mentioned earlier. Needless to say, all three categories feed upon one another.

All four authors focused attention on the cultural importance of women being both mothers and providers. In terms of mothering, women enter mating relations as spouses, partners, or girlfriends; they bear children as mothers, but rear children as mothers or in a variety of other capacities as kin and kindred, for example, sister, niece, cousin. Women enter "in-law" relations with their children's father's kin, whether that relationship is state-sanctioned or not. They are also the "in-laws" for other women and men, and they maintain ties with their consanguineal household, as somebody's daughter

or sister. The concept of the realm of female responsibility (Durant-Gonzalez 1982) enables Afro-Caribbean women to engage in the complex nature of mothering and providing, which is expected of them as females in their societies. This means too, that black Caribbean women also become active participants in networks which increase their chances of survival and cultural fulfillment.

Networks with their siblings and kin and kindred often involve joint ownership of land and material and/or access to resources, obligations to one another, and reciprocal exchanges of a varied nature (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1981). A combination of cultural motivations encourages such behavior so that an Afro-Caribbean woman can satisfy those sets of expectations of her immediate kin group and of her kindred network. Here, the notions of relative equality between the sexes, a sense of autonomy and esteem, and the image of womanhood validate the need to pursue wage labor and other economic activities (Barrow 1986a). These notions also underscore the sexual divison of domestic labor. Clearly, certain roles and behaviors belonging to either sex or in a specific capacity cannot be commonly assumed and isolated from the historical and socioeconomic context in which they appeared.

Further, much of the kinship activities just described take place in and around the families and households as they were defined by Gonzalez (1970). Again, those domestic units may be composed of a variety of immediate kin, extended kin, and kindred who contribute to their kin systems in a variety of ways.

In these examples of feminist anthropological studies on the role and status of women, three themes appear. The first theme concerns contradictory ideologies at work--one ideology, European based, is considered the "ideal," and the other, an African based cultural system is considered deviant, though it actually serves the majority of these populations. For example, Yolanda Moses (1981:511) concluded her study on sex roles in Montserrat by stating that "both men and women learn contradictory ideal sex roles that they cannot fulfill." The second focuses on the role of motherhood in its widest definition, as combination of mothering and providing. The third theme also raised in these studies on Afro-Caribbean women addresses the reality of fulfilling these cultural expectations. The ability of the majority of Afro-Caribbean women to provide is becoming more difficult to carry out, both in light of the way modern capitalism has penetrated Caribbean economies, and the extent of the responsibilities women have to bear.

How Afro-Caribbean women fulfill their role as mother and provider is the substance of the next category of recent anthropological studies on gender, which also involves the nature of kin relationships.

Women, Work, and Households

As mentioned earlier, women were the subjects of much of the Post War and related research, but not the topic of inquiry. Often the roles that women played in society were seen as adaptations to the economic and social situations of men, who could not carry out their expected familial responsibilites according to the prescribed "norm." What women did seemed secondary, especially in the economic sector. A generation of anthropologists

have put women into the discussion of the economy and the family. Not only are women included in the analysis, but also are men and children in all of their social roles. Examples of this type of research are Deborah D'Amico-Samuels' (1986) research on tourism, women, work, and the family, Shellee Colon's (9186) study of women, family, and migration, and A. Lynne Bolles' examination on economic crises and working class household structure.

In her study, "You Can't Get Me Out of the Race: Women and Economic Development in Negril, Jamaica," Debby D'Amico-Samuels carefully documents the interplay of historical, cultural precedents of gender relations and the changing relations of production and reproduction in a fishing, coconut-processing village which was transformed into a tourist spot. She notes the transformation in women's economic activities from subsistence agriculturalists and market traders with its high social evaluation fixed to women's work, to women market sellers of beads, baskets, and other tourist-related crafts with the resulting depreciation of female labor. Corresponding changes included the influence of local politics, class and color stratification systems, and the functioning of an economic development model.

One of the features of Negril's tourist sector was the creation of a crafts market for vendors to sell their goods. D'Amico-Samuels compared, by gender of the vendor, what was sold, the rate of profit, and other business strategies. She found, in questioning women vendors about their profit, that they had difficulty in estimating overhead costs and household neccessities. Profit seemed to be identified with what was left over after there was both "enough stock in the shop and enough food in the house."

Repeating the theme of the image of motherhood, one asset which allows women to engage in productive activities is that often they are enmeshed in their reproductive roles. "If women's work activities and earning are more closely tied to household responsibilities than men's, this may mean that women make decisions about time and money differently than do men, and that they must be more mindful of others making these decisions" (D'Amico-Samuels 1986:238). Furthermore, what this case study also showed is that when women's productive activities are closely tied to those which are capitalist in nature, the division of labor by gender and the inequality in remuneration become more acute.

Shellee Colon's research (1986) on Caribbean women private household workers, draws into the picture of women, family, and work the extent to which this group of people goes to maintain its sense of independence and autonomy. Here, women from varying classes of society from St. Vincent leave that island to work as private domestics in New York City, in order to realize an earning capacity necessary to fulfill their "realm of female responsibility." Because the economy of a country like St. Vincent places severe economic constraints on both men and women, people search for alternatives. The kinds of dramatic decisions called for to motivate women to seek alternatives are not easy to make. But they become essential decisions in survival strategies for many Afro-Caribbean women. The short-term goal of these women migrants is to immediately fulfill their duties and obligations to family and dependents--maintaining their spots in the St. Vincent-based domestic network. The long-term plan is to acquire a way to do this networking in a manner which involves fewer problems such as becoming a U.S. citizen and sponsoring the migration of those dependents to the United

States. Colon vividly describes the price that Black Caribbean women pay in securing "independence" and "autonomy"--acts not to be taken lightly.

The last example of how larger social forces influence the lives of women and their dependents is my own work in Jamaica. That research delineates the links between urban working class Jamaican households and international monopoly capitalism. Regardless of their composition, all urban working class women and their household members tend to use a variety of economic activities to compensate for the lack of full employment and to guarantee their survival. The economic constraints stem from the political economy of Jamaica, which is in turn determined directly and indirectly by the movement of international capital. The coexistence of the formal and informal economic sectors exemplifies the level and location of international capital in the economy. And the way working class people utilize those sectors on their own behalf suggests another strategy in which women fulfill their responsibilites to self and other.

An informal economic activity, a "backyard nursery," illustrates how the economic sector incorporates a woman's family, neighborhood, and co-worker-based social networks for the survival of the individual as well as for the extended household unit. A backyard nursery is the most popular form of daycare among working class Jamaicans. One woman ran such a nursery in her Kingston home. She had two children of her own, the youngest of whom was a toddler. Previously, this woman had worked as a sewing machine operator in an off-shore production plant until she had her last child. When she returned from maternity leave, the factory had closed down. In need of an income and childcare, the woman told friends that she was taking care of children if they brought their own lunch. Former co-workers, friends, neighbors, and family dropped off their children on a regular or temporary basis thereafter. Although she no longer earned the weekly J$50.00 (approximately U.S. $28.24 in 1978) as a garment worker, her present day care earnings equaled what she lost in the formal sector, after her own child care costs were deducted.

The three examples of feminist anthropological studies on women, work, and households give the details of how the majority of Afro-Caribbean women must manage and manipulate that which they control in response to shrinking economic options. Sustaining and propelling these activities are the ideological supports which women learn as resources in their cultures. These patterns of behavior and worldview include the Afro-Caribbean women's concept of motherhood, her proper role in society, and the manner in which she adds to her own status and prestige by fulfilling her responsibilites to her kin network.

Conclusion

To identify Afro-Caribbean kinship systems through the view of a gender anaysis, this paper posed two questions. How did kinship and women get lost in the Post War literature, and how have these two areas of discourse come into the forefront of recent social science research. Clearly, what was intimated in the brief discussion of 25 years of research and study on the topic of family and household organization, showed how the structural-functional model tended to point research in a rather narrow direction--find the "ideal" nuclear family in Afro-Caribbean culture and society. Faced with

variations of social organization, including the nuclear family, that corpus of work devised a range of explanations for these behavior patterns in often biased interpretations. But in doing so the genre of research kept kinship-building from realizing its full potential for unraveling the structure it was in the process of studying.

The recent body of anthropological and sociological work guided by feminist theories has addressed the missing kin and kindred in households, in work sites, and in domestic networks of local and international spheres. These studies moved beyond the standard dichotomizing of the kin relations into private and public spheres, primarily because the organizations of the groups under study--Afro-Caribbean people in different societies--do not, for the most part, adhere to such compartmentalization. In addition, while clarifying the role of women in society, the roles of men and children also take on more substantive meaning for understanding kinship, household organization, and other structures of the culture under study.

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