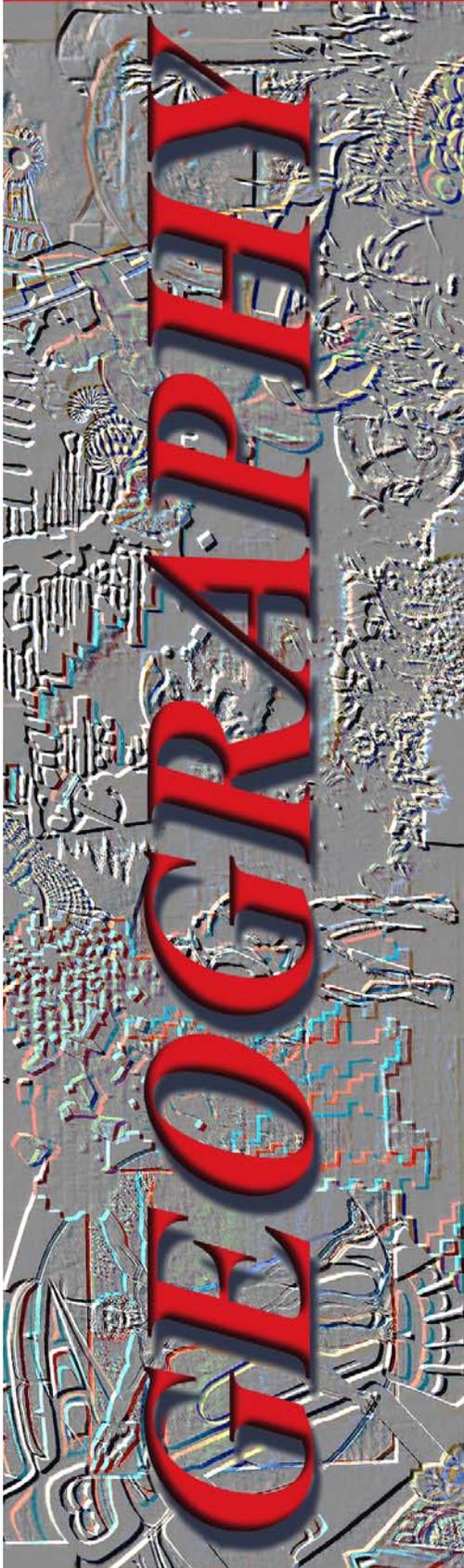


The Friendship Patterns of
Transnational Migrants:

*The Case of Bajan-Brits and their
Friendships on 'Return' to Barbados*

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The University of Reading

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Abstract

While the academic literature has demonstrated the importance of social networks in relation to the process of migration, investigations have rarely examined in detail the personal-social adjustment issues that migrants and return migrants face. To this end, the present study examines the nature and types of friendship patterns that young British return migrants cultivate in Barbados. The research thereby centres on a wholly under-researched demographic group, that is young return migrants, or second generation Barbadians, who have decided to “return” to the birthplace of their parents. The investigation is based on 51 in-depth interviews carried out with young returnees to Barbados. Presenting a simple taxonomy of friendship types, it is argued that for the Bajan-Brits under study, the cultivation of new friendships is highly problematic. The research identifies what we refer to as the ‘*Insular transnational*’, ‘*We are different*’ and ‘*All-Inclusive Transnational*’ friendship types among the young returnees. This analysis also shows that problems of friendship are highly gendered, with females reporting the most problems, due to what is perceived as sexual and workplace competition. It is also stressed that these circumstances exemplify the essentially ‘hybrid’, ‘liminal’ and ‘inbetween’ positionality of the young returnees within contemporary Barbadian society.

Key Words

Transnational migrants; Friendship patterns; Typology of friendships; Young Returning Nationals; Return migration; Barbados; Caribbean

“It is not so much difficult making friends. But people - their friendships are different here. It is not like in England. I know I have had some friends who I’ve had for years and probably will have for the rest of my life, sort of thing. I find in Barbados your friends are very superficial...they are your friends... ’cause I don’t have any real...what you could call a real close Barbadian friend, right? Only, mainly, because they are just different - different views, different ways of thinking, different culture comes into it. Your upbringing always comes into it and even when you talk to people, just by what you say to people, they might be misconstrued because of how Bajans talk. It is difficult in that respect...”

(A Bajan-Brit’s view of her friendship patterns in Barbados)

Introduction

Research has demonstrated the significant role that is played by social networks, for example, kinship and friendship ties, in facilitating emigration and the subsequent adjustment processes among immigrants (Wirth, 1928; Litvak, 1960; MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964; Tilly and Brown, 1968; Choldin, 1973; Massey, 1990; Tilly, 1990; Vertovec, 2002). Moreover, within the context of the Caribbean, Chamberlain (1997) and Pessar (1997) have concurred on the significance of kinship and friendship patterns as factors shaping the transnational identities of migrants both to, and from, the region. However, having emphasised the significance of friendship ties as part of the migration process, few studies have delved further and examined in detail the adjustment processes faced by migrants. Thus, there is a dearth of literature on the nature and types of friendship patterns that migrants and return migrants cultivate in the course of adjusting to their new homelands.

The salience of such adjustment issues is reflected by the fact that in a pilot study of 'foreign-born' and 'young' returnees to Barbados, difficulties in establishing friendships represented the most frequently mentioned issue of adjustment among the informants, being cited by nineteen of the twenty-five informants (Potter, 2001, 2003; Potter and Phillips, 2002). To this end, the present article offers an examination of the nature and types of friendship patterns that young Bajan-Brits cultivate as part of their 'return' adjustment in Barbados. The research was carried out as part of a major study of Bajan-Brit return. This paper demonstrates that forming friendship patterns proves a significant adjustment on return.

Background to the current research

On research trips to the eastern Caribbean at the end of the 1990s, Potter (2001, 2003) identified a cohort of "*Young Returning Migrants*" to the Caribbean, most of whom could be described as "*Foreign-Born Returning Nationals*". These were generally second generation West Indians, born in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada or elsewhere, of first generation West Indian immigrants, who for a variety of reasons, had decided to "return to" the countries that they themselves had not come from, but where their parents were born. In this context, this relatively new cohort of transnational migrants had never been the focus of specific study, and although aware of the existence of such migrants, neither the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the respective countries, nor the High Commissions in London had precise details as to the number of such migrants, their migration histories, or their employment and

wider socio-economic characteristics (see Potter and Phillips, 2002). As noted over twenty years ago, while nations collect precise statistics concerning ‘aliens’, the same seldom seems to apply with respect to returning citizens (Rhoades, 1979; Gmelch, 1980).

An exploratory research project, the first of its kind in the Caribbean, was therefore carried out from 1999 to 2000, funded by the British Academy (Potter, 2001). The aim was to provide the first analysis of this new cohort of migrants, its duration and socio-economic impacts. In particular, by means of open-ended semi-structured interviews, the project investigated the experiences and attitudes of such young returnees to the land of their parents. This preliminary research was carried out in Barbados and St Lucia, and descriptive overviews of the findings of these pilot studies have been presented in Potter (2003). Some 25 interviews were carried out in Barbados at the end of 1999, and 15 interviews in St Lucia at the beginning of 2000. Contacts were initially made via the various organizations assisting with the research, and were snowballed thereafter.

The pilot research established a number of recurrent themes, which provided a context for further investigation. As already noted, the difficulties experienced by young female returnees in establishing friendship patterns with indigenous females was one of these recurrent themes. Another major constellation of adjustments related to issues involving various aspects of racialised, gendered and national identities. Moreover, these adjustment issues were very much related to the ‘transnational’, ‘hybrid’ and ‘inbetween’ characters of the young returnees who seemed to occupy liminal racial, social, economic positions within Barbadian society (see Potter, 2001, Potter, 2003; Phillips and Potter, 2002).

The Current Research Design

Having identified in broad terms, the issues affecting this cohort of young returnees to the Caribbean, an in-depth examination of the experiences and adjustments that were faced by such young returnees was undertaken. The current research project, under the title “*Social dynamics of foreign-born and young returning nationals to the Caribbean*”, is funded by The Leverhulme Trust, with the project extending from January 2002 to July 2006 (see Potter and Phillips, 2002; Phillips and Potter, 2003).

The principal target group for the study was *Foreign-Born Returning Nationals*, those who were born in the United Kingdom (or the United States etc) and who have decided to make Barbados their home. The present paper deals with young returnees to Barbados. Such migrants can also be referred to as ‘British Barbadians’, or ‘American Barbadians’. All those who have a Barbadian parent can claim nationality by descent. Another group are those who

were born in the Caribbean, but who later traveled to the United Kingdom (or elsewhere) with their parents. If after ten years or more they return to live in the Caribbean, they also qualify as returning nationals. In the present research, members of this group are described as *Young Returning Nationals*. They are frequently individuals who return when their parents reach the age of retirement, as part of a wider family move. A third, but smaller group comprises those who are married to a Barbadian citizen. The project was primarily interested in the first group, but as noted below, a smaller number of informants from the other two categories were interviewed.

The research design included detailed discussions with relevant politicians and policy makers, searches of national newspaper archives and focus group discussions with members of the indigenous Barbadian public concerning their attitudes to returnees. However, the principal source of information was 51 in-depth, qualitative interviews conducted with foreign-born and young returning nationals. In all but one case, the interviewees were happy for the discussions to be taped. The interviews were semi-structured in that they sought to cover all the major life domains associated with migration that had previously been identified in the pilot study. All of the interviews were fully transcribed and NUD-IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising) software was used to assist with the qualitative analysis of the data. The interviews rendered invaluable insights concerning migration histories, family and socio-economic standing, motives for migrating, employment and educational history, and socio-cultural adjustments and experiences. As noted, the interviews were carried out between March and June 2002.

The basic socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the interviewees are shown in *Table 1*. As with the pilot study (Potter, 2003), the overwhelming majority of young returnees were females, some 38, against 13 males making up the sample. Nearly 63 per cent were foreign-born, with 29 out of the 32 born outside Barbados, in the United Kingdom. A total of 19 of the interviewees while having been born in Barbados, had been brought up overseas, the majority in the UK. For this reason, although the sample of 51 returnees contains one person born in the USA, one in Germany and one in another Caribbean territory (*Table 1*), the blanket term ‘Bajan Brit’ is used as simple shorthand for the group in the main body of the present paper.

Table 1: Basic Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Foreign-Born and Young Returning Nationals to Barbados (N=51)

Sex:

Female	38	Male	13
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Place of Birth:

United Kingdom	29	USA	1
Barbados	19	Other Caribbean	1
USA	1		

Race

Black	44	White	7
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Age of Young Returning Nationals:

Range 21-69 years

Median	40 yrs	In their 20s	2
Mean	40.76 yrs	In their 30s	22
		In their 40s	21
		In their 50s	5
		In their 60s	1

Age on Returning to Barbados:

Range 20-65 years

Median	31 yrs	In their twenties	17
Mean	33.16 yrs	In their 30s	24
		In their 40s	5
		In their 50s	4
		In their 60s	1

Period Lived in Barbados since Return:

Range 1-24 years

Median	9 yrs	20 plus years	2
Mean	7.60 yrs	15-19 years	10
		10-14 yrs	5
		5-9 yrs	18
		0-4 yr	16

Terminal Level of Education:

University	18	Secondary	2
College	31		

Family Status of Young and Foreign-Born Returnees:

Married	26	No children	11
Single	10	1 child	18
Visiting union	9	2 children	15
Divorced	5	3 children	6
Separated	1	4 children	1

Residential Status:

Living with own family	27	Living alone	7
Living with parents	16	No data	1

Birth Place of Partner:

Barbados	33	New Zealand	1
England	3	Germany	1
Canada	2	Not applicable	10
Trinidad	1		

Parent's Place of Birth:

Barbados	84	St Vincent	2
United Kingdom	5	Canada	1
Guyana	4	Jamaica	1
Germany	2	Netherlands Antilles	1
Antigua	2		

Parents' Country of Residence:

Barbados	77	Germany	2
United Kingdom	19	Deceased	2
Canada	2		

(Source: Authors' Survey 2002)

The average age of the young returnees was just over 33 years when they migrated, and they had been living in Barbados for an average of just over seven and a half years (*Table 1*). Most had migrated to Barbados when they were in their 30s, with this age cohort accounting for roughly half the total sample. At the time of the interviews, the returnees had an average age of just over 40 years, with an age range extending from 21 to 69 years. With regard to race, 44 of the returnees were black and 7 were white. Virtually all the interviewees could be classified as middle-class. With respect to their terminal level of education, for instance, virtually all had been to college, and over 35 per cent had been to university. The jobs that the returnees were doing in Barbados are shown listed in *Table 2*. Most had jobs that might be described as professional and which required training, with a fair representation of accountants, administrators and managers of various types. Notably, only two of the respondents were unemployed at the time of the interviews.

Table 2: The Occupations of the Foreign-Born and Young Returning Nationals to Barbados by Sex

Females:

Administrator
 Manager
 Administrator
 Artist
 Sales (self-employed)
 Accountant
 School teacher
 Training Officer
 Educational psychologist
 Marketing manager
 Banker
 Manager
 Manager
 Administrator
 Administrator
 Human Resources manager
 Consultant
 Accountant
 Computer Operator
 Custom Services manager
 Administrator
 Beautician (self-employed)
 Accountant
 Airline ground staff
 Teacher
 Radio broadcaster
 Nurse
 Administrator
 Forecast analyst
 Careers advisor
 Social worker (unemployed)
 Chef
 General manager
 Administrator
 Rehabilitation therapist
 Real Estate agent
 Secretary (unemployed)
 Nurse

Males:

Computer networker (self-employed)
 Sales engineer
 Farmer (self-employed)
 Manager
 Local Government officer
 Photographer (self-employed)
 General manager
 Company Executive Officer
 Salesman
 Manager
 Accountant
 Farmer (self-employed)
 Self-employed

Turning to the wider family circumstances of the returnees, over half (26) said they were legally married, and nine described themselves as part of a visiting union. Just over 78 per cent had children, with the modal class being one child, a category that accounted for 18 of the interviewees. The majority, some 33 out of 51, had partners who had been born in

Barbados. Turning to the parents of the young returnees, significantly, 77 out of the total of 102 were also living in Barbados at the time the interviews were carried out, thereby reinforcing the importance of older retired returnees in promoting the return of their offspring as young/foreign-born returnees. This was also reflected in the fact that 16 (31.37 per cent) of the returnees reported that they were living with their parents at the time they were interviewed.

Barbados and Return Migration: A Brief Profile

There are, of course, good socio-economic and development-oriented reasons why the progeny of Caribbean migrants to the UK and USA might consider 'returning' to the land of their parents. Quite simply, Barbados has achieved considerable economic success in the period since independence in 1966. Although only a small country, some 430 square kms in extent, Barbados now scores in the high category on the United Nation's *Human Development Index* (HDI). Indeed, on this basis, in recent promotional literature, Barbados has described itself as the 'leading nation in the developing world'. Barbados recorded a per capita income of \$US 14,353 in 2001, putting it ahead of several European nations. It boasts an excellent education system and according to national statistics, a 97 per cent adult literacy rate.

During the period of British colonial rule, extending from 1627 to 1966, Barbados was almost exclusively developed as a monocultural sugar economy, based on plantations and slavery. It is generally agreed that the conditions faced by black slaves in the Caribbean were far harsher than those faced by slaves in America. The legacy of the colonial system is still witnessed in the highly skewed relationship that exists between race and ownership within the economy. Thus, much of the economy is in the hands of a small number of white families, although the majority of the population is described as black for census purposes (92 per cent in 1991 according to Lewis, 2001). These families have in the past been referred to as owning the 'Big Six' companies. In the political realm, however, there has been the emergence of a black ruling elite, together with associated black professional and business groups within the population.

In the period since independence, manufacturing, tourism and latterly offshore data processing have become the mainstays of the Barbadian economy. Thus, Barbados now affords good employment prospects for migrants, especially via its well-developed tourism sector, but also in the public and private service sectors more generally. For example, tourism currently accounts for 13,970 jobs directly and manufacturing 11,390; whilst 25,390 are employed in Government services and 18,190 in the general service category.

As noted by Potter and Dann (1987), Barbados has clearly come a long way since the colonial period. Indeed, the island frequently used to be referred to as “Little England” as a result of its British colonial past. However, in the post-colonial period, there is considerable evidence that Barbados has turned its attention northwards in the direction of the United States. As early as 1987, Potter and Dann suggested that “Little America” might be a more appropriate description of this former colony. This certainly seems increasingly true in terms of the consumption of mass culture, including music and cable television, migration paths and the regular recreational travels of the relatively wealthy and mobile (Potter 1993).

The Friendship Patterns of Bajan-Brit Returnees: Toward a Typology of Friendship Patterns

With the background of the relative success of the national economy and the associated changes that have occurred since 1966, this research addresses the issues and problems that the Bajan-Brit returnees perceive they have to face following their ‘return’ to the land of origin of their parents. The analysis emphasises the difficulties that these returnees appear to face in their efforts to establish new friendships, and in some cases, the importance of their pre-existing friendships and kinship links. Throughout the analysis, the ‘hybrid’, ‘inbetween’ and ‘liminal’ positionality of the returnees becomes clear.

Such hybrid resonances were also identified in relation to issues of race and colour-class among the young returnees (Phillips and Potter, 2002; Potter and Phillips, 2003). Thus, Phillips and Potter (2003) have argued that the ‘black skin-white mask’ racial identity of the Bajan-Brits affords them economic and some social privileges in post-colonial Barbados. This liminal identity, formed just above the black class and below the white-mercantile class affords the opportunity of transcending traditional indigenous social and economic strictures, that are based primarily on race. However, in respect of the cultivation of new friendships, for the most part, this hybrid and inbetween positionality seems to have an alienating effect. The types of new friendship patterns made by the returnees are highly dependent on their ability and/or willingness to negotiate within these particular local spaces and the scope of the pre-existing social networks they already have in place in Barbados and elsewhere, prior to return.

According to the in-depth interviews, there is an argument for a tripartite subdivision in relation to friendship patterns. This taxonomy of social types is primarily based on the level and degree of established social support networks or ‘social embeddedness’ that is

displayed by the young returnees (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Curran and Saguy, 2003). The three main categories of Bajan-Brits recognised are referred to as the '*Insular Transnational*', '*We Are Different*', and '*All-inclusive Transnational*' types. If conceptualised as forming a continuum, the '*Insular Transnational*' types would be located at one end, and the '*All-inclusive Transnationals*' at the other. However, the great majority of the Bajan-Brits, some seventy-five per cent, are to be found in the middle, '*We Are Different*' category.

However, it must be emphasised that these social types are not mutually exclusive. Rather they can be viewed as representing typical 'fuzzy' categories, since individuals may simultaneously embody elements of more than one type. As Schutz (1970:139) has argued, typifications not only make it possible to account for experience, rendering things and occurrences recognizable as being of a particular realm but are also indeterminate, adaptable and modifiable - that is, incomplete and open. It is strictly in this sense that an explanation of the friendship experiences of the young Bajan-Brit return migrants is couched in terms of a three-fold typology. These three types are elaborated below by direct recourse to the interviewees' imparted narratives.

The 'Insular Transnational'

I am not a social girl - so I never made any friends - because I never wanted to...

(An '*Insular Transnational*'s' view on establishing new friendships)

The evidence provided by our interviews suggested that the '*Insular Transnational*', the first of the three social types recognised, is typically in her/his late thirties and is living with immediate family, frequently parents, or with a partner and children. He/she has made little effort to cultivate new friendships in Barbados. This lack of cultivation of friends appears to be a direct reflection of already possessing strong social support networks, for example, kinship ties in the form of an immediate family and established friendships in Barbados and/or in England. Moreover, the high degree of social embeddedness provided by such dense, continuing kinship and friendship networks seems to have served to slow assimilation and acculturation of the young returnees into wider Barbadian society (Choldan, 1999; Curran and Saguy, 2003). Hence, it is not surprising that to a considerable degree, the '*Insular Transnational*' has remained isolated from mainstream Barbados.

It is argued here that the '*Insular Transnational*' type can be further segmented into three mutually inclusive types. Although some might question whether the first two categories,

consisting of the '*social loner*' and '*family-oriented*' can be viewed as truly transnational, we contend that they are transnational by virtue of members having emigrated from the UK and maintaining friendship patterns, however limited, on at least two continents. The sub-types recognised are:-

- i) the '*Social Loner*' who feels no need to initiate friendships
- ii) the '*Family-Oriented*' individual whose need to forge new social networks within a foreign place is subsumed within family life; and
- iii) the '*Established Transnational*' whose already established friendships in England results in little need to develop new friends. This group is transnational by virtue of maintaining a continuing network of supports outside Barbados (Naoto, 2000).

The '*Insular Transnational*' may embody elements of more than one type under this categorisation. For example, there is the case of Dave¹, who embodies both '*family-oriented*' and '*established transnational*' elements. He has strong social support in the form of his family. He is married to a Bajan woman and has three children all under the age of five. Moreover, he has maintained friends in England and consequently has not made much of an effort to cultivate new friendships in Barbados. His views were typical of the '*Insular Transnational*':

I never tried to make a real friend here because I was more or less raised with those guys and girls (in England), so I never thought that I could ever get that back. But I get along well with people here. It is the word "friend" that is getting me...I guess I would have to say no, I don't have a lot of friends here really, compared to what I call a friend. I know a lot of people here...I don't hang out a lot. I did that before coming here, so that's why I don't miss that sort of thing. I play with my children.

One of the female informant's narratives also indicated that she has strong family support and can be regarded as a 'Social Loner'. She lives with her father, an older returnee and has a son, and the narrative also speaks of this and life cycle factors:

I don't really have any friends. I am not really a 'friend person'. I am a loner. Friends can make things difficult. I have family here but I am pretty much a loner. I have a couple of acquaintances and a friend that I have known for seventeen years, since I have been coming to Barbados. I have

three other friends, but we don't really see each other. But I do have friends in England.

On the other hand, Sheila's narrative is more indicative of the pure '*Family-Oriented*' type:

I don't have a lot of space to play anyway. I am a parent and I put a lot of energy into being a parent, so I am not out and about...

By contrast, a further informant's account serves to exemplify the '*Established Transnational*':

Most of my friends are still in the UK or have some association with the UK. I wouldn't say that I have any friends in Barbados, you know, people that I would tell my most intimate secrets to. Anyway, that is not advisable. I know it is a terrible thing to say, but they need to mind their own business. Things get thrown in your face if you are not careful. My friends are my immediate family.

The '*Insular Transnational*' with his/her high degree of social support in the form of family and strong transnational friendships may be perceived as socially isolated from Barbadian society. He/she already has a dense social network of support in the UK and Barbados. Moreover, life cycle factors relating to child care and parents appear to play a significant role with respect to the *Insular Transnational*. Therefore, the cultivation of new friendships is not fundamental to his/her social adjustment to Barbadian life. The friendship patterns of this social type are essentially a reflection of the returnees' liminal positionality within contemporary Barbadian society.

The 'We are different' Type:

It just so happens that most of my friends that I have here are returning nationals or people who have travelled, you know...those are the people who I am mainly with here.

(a typical viewpoint of a '*We Are Different*' type)

On the basis of the extended interviews, it was clear that the '*We Are Different*' type represents the largest categorisation, accounting for around seventy-five per cent of interviewees. The '*We Are Different*' category was generally composed of young returnees,

who tended to forge friendships with other returnees, or with those Barbadians and other expatriates who have lived abroad for substantial periods. This social type embodies what Tsuda (1999, 2000) has referred to as “deterritorialised nationality” in his study of adjustment among Japanese-Brazilian returnees to Japan. In this context, “deterritorialised nationality” connotes the strengthening and assertion of a strong English identity among the Bajan-Brits and a consequent failure in negotiating Barbadian culture. These ‘*We Are Different*’ returnees are generally single, in their mid- to late- thirties, and live with their returnee parents. They have professional jobs and tend to ‘stick to their own.’ Consequently, they utilise their hybrid ‘difference’ from the indigenous population as a yardstick to forge new friendships with other expatriates living in Barbados. Thus, their friendship patterns are very much centred on the expatriate community, and their lifestyles are largely independent of the indigenous population. The categorisation of the ‘*We are different type*’ can be further segmented, based on the particular reasons that are expressed for forging these new relationships based on commonalities of difference. Thus, on the basis of the interviews, the following four-fold sub-categorisation is offered:

- i) the ‘*They don’t Understand Us*’ type;
- ii) the ‘*I don’t get along with Bajan females*’ type;
- iii) the ‘*Exploited*’; and
- iv) the ‘*Outsider*’

‘*They don’t Understand Us*’ types may tend to explain their predilection to interact only with expatriates by recourse to perceived cultural conflict with local Barbadians. Both males and female informants expressed the view that it is difficult to relate to, and cultivate friendships with, local Barbadians, due to cultural differences. For example, the following excerpt expresses a typical view from a male who may be seen as falling into the ‘*They don’t Understand Us*’ type. He exemplifies the cultural conflict in terms of sports:

A lot of English guys that have come back don’t really interact with a lot of people. I will be honest and say this: we don’t interact. They interact with their own group. It is like your own mini-English sect of people. You know, you just stick with them. ‘Cause when I sit down and talk to you about Arsenal or Manchester United, you can identify. But you find in Barbados, and you have to talk about anything, you always have to explain yourself. That is too much of a conversation to have with one person!

When you go and sit down with someone that already understands and talk with them and get some kind of enjoyment from that, you know. Down here you find that you create a topic and you have to explain what you mean. It is a two way thing. You don't have to do no more than already you have done. I mean the mere fact that you are always trying to make the effort and they are always blocking you. I mean what more can you do?

Another informant, a female in this instance, maintained that it is the differences between her and local Barbadians that explains her tendency to have only close friends from Britain:

I have acquaintances. I have very good acquaintances that I work with and whatever, but I wouldn't actually call them like, close friends - mainly because at the end of the day, you are still viewed as somebody different that wasn't born here, you know. I don't know if they view you as someone that thinks they are better than them or whatever else. Not that I am going to come over with that attitude, 'cause I don't feel that I am better than anyone else. You know, I think people think that when you come from England you are of a different breed, if you like. But my two closest friends are actually British.

The two extracts that follow generally exemplify the types of sentiment concerning differences in cultural mores that are frequently expressed by the '*We Are Different*' social type as the reason why they face difficulties in making indigenous friends:

I find that most of my friends are either returning nationals from England or America or Canada. It's a different culture, it really is. I mean where I worked, no matter who I worked with...I mean...I think...let me put it this way...everywhere I worked in England, I was the only black person on staff - I can't remember ever working with another black person. I guess it was the culture. You know, Friday evening you might go for a drink, if it is someone's birthday, you know, you are going to do something, you know. Here, there is none of that...I have talked to other people as well. There is no camaraderie among the employees at all...Everybody just leaves and go home.

I have a lot of friends that are returning nationals. I guess like attracts like. They have made a life here. Sometimes we meet and just bitch about being here, you know. My husband is from Barbados - had a typical village life and I find that he crosses all boundaries. Also there is a lot of mistrust among women and women socialising with men. A lot of people don't like to see other people do well...playing and pretentious...'you don't have any business doing better than me' sort of mentality.

Members of the '*I Don't Get Along With Females*' type are generally female Bajan-Brits who have tried to initiate friendships with the local female populace, but owing to some kind of gendered conflict, ultimately feel that they have not been successful. This attempt at developing female networks is not surprising, since women are regarded as responsible for keeping essential social structures in place following migration (Boyd, 1989; Massey, 1990; Pedraza, 1991; Basch, Schiller and Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Salaff, 2003). Such gendered conflict may be manifested in three instances: firstly, when female Bajan-Brits do not conform to the gendered respectability norms expected of their local counterparts (Wilson, 1973) ²; secondly, in cases when overtures of friendship by local females are viewed by female Bajan-Brits as potential avenues of exploitation; and lastly, when local females view the female returnees as direct competitors for local men. Moreover, this lack of success speaks of the female Bajan-Brits' inability to understand and negotiate genuine friendships within local gendered female spaces. '*I Don't Get Along With Females*' types have remained largely unsuccessful in negotiating such gendered spaces, and have instead maintained close ties with female expatriates and returnees, thereby stressing their hybridity and inbetweenness.

In the following excerpt, a female informant points to gendered normative differentiation based upon respectability and reputation (Wilson, 1973) in the context of Barbados, which makes friendships with females difficult. It would appear that her Western normative expectations of females are quite different from those involved in the respectability notions held by local Bajans. In Barbados, there is still a traditional, distinct separation between male and female spaces and consequent assumptions concerning appropriate behaviour. This western-emancipated female finds it difficult to 'renegotiate' within this traditional gendered space:

I find in England you go to pubs, nightclubs, the works, and here, you are looked down a bit like a scorned woman if you party a lot. You know, if you talk to Bajan women they say no, they don't drink, they don't go partying, don't smoke...they have their own reasons why they think ladies

shouldn't go there. But I also notice as well, you only see males in the local rum shops and so on...so, I never really felt comfortable to entice women to go partying with me.

In the next narrative, another female informant also discusses her own attempts to come to terms with this gendered difference based on respectability and reputation, which serves to separate women and men in Barbados:

I am not sure about these...well two things. To be fair when I came here I was not working, so you see, most Bajan women now do work, alright, that's one thing. It's the same thing, the women are down at the table and the men are at the bar, you know. When I first came here, if you went anywhere, drinks or brunch or anything, men would be in one corner and women in another. Now I had my children late and was always fed up with people saying, 'you have children?...' 'cause I was 34 before I had my first child and they will be talking...really nappies and stuff like that and I would tend to go talk with the men, because there are so many interesting things to talk about and again in this sou-sou³ group you talk politics, you know, interesting things. I think some of the outlooks tend to be very narrow and I think those were barriers they put on themselves. They didn't have to do that. They were not unintelligent women, you know...

In the next two narratives, informants comment on what they perceive as the main difficulties involved in making new female friends in Barbados. In this context, what would be perceived locally as cultural overtures of indigenous female bonding, is viewed by the Bajan-Brit female as ways of gaining malicious and/or exploitative access into their personal lives:

It is hard to make women friends here. You have to choose friends wisely, 'cause Bajans are very critical. They don't like outsiders you know, they always call you "foreigner." But you also have to have a give and take attitude. A lot of people come down here with a big attitude and want to tell Bajans what to do. That is not the way. Women gossip too much and I find in order to be friends they have to know my business and my past. That is something that needs to be changed!

I tried to make friends, but it is hard to make female friends...now I am very cautious. 'Cause basically they just want to know your business. Most of my friends are either those who left and have come back or they are from other islands. I have a few friends who are from England.

Another common perception held by many female returnees is that sexual competition for men plays an integral part in their inability to forge friendships with Bajan women. This is well illustrated in the excerpts that follow:-

I find it difficult to make Bajan friends - particularly Bajan women I find are jealous of you. They see you as a foreigner trying to take something from them...It doesn't really bother me...I find that they are very back stabbing...I have two single Bajan friends, but the majority...jealousy plays a major part in it. I have a lot of male friends - but the women....If they see a foreign woman out, they assume that you want their man. Bajan men like foreign women, 'cause they live a different sort of life. I hear that all of the time.

I don't have much female friends...they treat you like a foreigner...they think that you come here to take the good men. They have a complex...and they don't invite you to be friendly with them.

Bajan women don't like me...they think that I want their man. I have a good friend who was born here but lived in Canada, and she feels also like an outsider. So we have formed an alliance...she is a white Bajan. She lived here for six years before I did, so she gives me the low-down and helps me to process the behaviour and tells me not to take things personally.

Two somewhat more limited categories, that may be regarded as falling within the '*We Are Different*' typology are the '*Exploited*' and the '*Outsider*'. The '*Exploited*' are usually young male returnees in their early thirties, who typically live with their returned parents. They have no children and feel the need to establish friendships with young Barbadians of broadly the same age. However, like their female counterparts, they perceive any gambits of friendships as possible vehicles of exploitation:

It was very difficult, because on the premise most of my friends at first, wanted me like...I came to them as an ATM machine then. Right now I would say to you, on a scale of 1-10, I haven't got any friends in Barbados. I will break it down to you. I have lots of friends *per se* that I can talk to, right. But a friend is someone that you can trust. I don't have any of those right, because they all on the same agenda - they always want money from you. They want to use you. If you go out to a pub or bar, they always want you to buy their drinks, right. It is because you are English and they think you have money. They will always say you look nice and give you compliments and those compliments would lead you to paying for everything. I have met a lot of genuine people like my girlfriend that I would call my friends, but I would not sit down and tell them my innermost secrets. Barbados is an indigenous small society and what you say to your friends could be spread as you walk out from there. I think the hardest thing is coming to Barbados for any young person is that: friends will be difficult, because people will always be ultimately using you for ulterior motives.

The '*Outsiders*', also typically in their early thirties, may be males or females, who feel that they have to resort to interacting with expatriates because of the perceived insularity of Barbadian society. It would appear that for these hybrid individuals some barriers, like the old school boy network, cannot be overcome. In the following excerpt, one of our female informants regards this insularity as a consequence of the operation of the old school network:

It may be 'cause they have their own clique of friends, 'cause I realise as well, whenever you go anywhere and you meet up with any...you know, if you are invited to a little cocktail party or anything and you are chatting with people, within the first 10 minutes of the conversation, they have found out which school you went to and basically, if you haven't been to a school that they know or be in a certain...I guess social class, it doesn't mean anything to them. I find, for me they socialise in that way you know, but I know, 'cause I always feel uncomfortable. Someone has actually come up to me and said, 'oh you went to St. Michaels, didn't you?' and I said 'oh, no'... 'but you *look like* a girl that went to St. Michaels'. So they want to categorise you...that pigeonhole (emphasis added).

One male informant perceived this insularity and subsequent associated difficulties in gaining access to Barbadians as a combination of the influences of schooling and wider socially-oriented activities, particularly the role of cricket in bonding males in Barbados (Beckles, 1998):

A lot of the social links for locals appeared to have been made during their schooling years. Also, the interests and hobbies of my Barbadian peers differed from mine. Cricket is a perfect example: one can form a friendly conversation with a complete stranger over cricket...

Generally, the *'We Are Different'* social type finds great difficulty in negotiating within friendships the cultural spaces of Barbadian society owing to the hybrid, liminal and inbetween natures of their identities (Phillips and Potter, 2003). Consequently, they strengthen and maintain their English identities. The adoption of an overt English identity represents a form of "deterritorialised nationality," embracing social isolation in the face of a failure to connect with the local Barbadian population.

The 'All-inclusive Transnational'

No, I feel that I've got friends that are males and females, white and black Bajans.

(The typical comment of an 'All-inclusive Transnational')

Although making up the smallest group among the informants, perhaps accounting for only five, or at the most ten, of the 51 young returnees we interviewed, the *'All-inclusive Transnational'* generally purports to have no problems in cultivating friends in Barbados, whilst simultaneously maintaining transnational friendships abroad. The All-inclusive transnational is truly international in not being hindered by borders or extant social strictures. Our interviews suggested that the 'all-inclusive transnational' will generally have come to Barbados with little or no support or family influence and with few extant friendships, and will have made some effort to overcome barriers which other types might have found insurmountable. Generally single, with few kinship ties in Barbados, he/she will have employed cultural activities and local agents of socialisation, in order to meet new people. Thus, he/she is able to assimilate more quickly into Bajan society, due to having no

established networks. Consequently, the 'All-inclusive Transnational' is highly successful in negotiating friendships within the cultural spaces of Barbados.

Typical comments of the all-inclusive transnational regarding friendship patterns take the form of positive affirmations:

I have no problems making friends...I talk to anybody. They are alright once you get chatting to them.

I didn't have a problem making friends at all actually. Things were more or less very welcoming, everybody I met, everything was more than welcoming. I mean I have more people on this island that know me. I walk down the road now, it is just like: 'Hi, how are you?' Everyone is very friendly...Don't have a problem with that at all...

In some instances, the 'All-inclusive Transnational' may have undertaken to facilitate new, local friendships by means of local avenues of socialisation. For example, one 'All-inclusive Transnational' in our sample discusses her experiences in seeking out friends. Although, still in contact with English friends, she had been able to meet and cultivate new English friends, via her job. And she has also cultivated new friendships with local Bajans via the gym and workplace. However, in this instance, it is of note that the form of these local friendships is qualified by the returnee:

I never really had a problem with this friendship thing, really. Because I was here on my own, I made a conscious effort, socialising...When I first came here I was a representative for a tour company, *Tropical Visions*, so I was socialising with a lot of clients...tours, partying...I was in contact with a lot of English people still. I missed my friends from home, yes; but they were glad that I was here, because they would come over and visit me. And I met with other returning nationals and we bonded. I would go to the gym, so I met a few girls at the gym who were Bajan, but we were friends on different levels.

Another informant, while maintaining his transnational links, found the church to be an effective forum in which to meet new people. The Church is viewed as a significant socialising institution in Barbados (Dann, 1984):

I have a lot of friends. I go to church and quite a few people knew me from young.

Notably in this case, it is salient that this was a young returnee who had lived in Barbados early in his life, before growing up in the UK, and this appears to have aided the process of re-integration to Barbadian society.

On the basis of the evidence provided by our research, it is tempting to suggest that the 'All-inclusive', for all intents and purposes, are the most successful of the social types among the Bajan-Brit young returnees. Their ability to develop and maintain both local and international friendships speaks to their truly transnational identities. Moreover, it demonstrates the concomitant relationship that may exist between strong social networks and complete transnationalism. As already noted, as a stand alone group of informants, this was by far and away the smallest, pointing to the obstacles that face any such measure of transnationalism.

Conclusion

Few studies have demonstrated the significance of friendships as a recurrent theme in the adjustment patterns of return migrants. Following the argument first presented by Potter and Phillips (2002) and Potter (2003), this paper has demonstrated that establishing friendship patterns is a major issue for young Bajan-Brit transnational returnees. Moreover, based upon a taxonomy of social types, consisting of the '*Insular Transnational*', the '*We are different*' type and the '*All-inclusive transnational*', this research suggests that within the highly gendered problematic of friendship, friendship patterns were decidedly dependent on the nature and degree of pre-existing social networks prior to 'return'.

While previous studies have pointed to the salience of social networks, encompassing kinship and friendship patterns in relation to the migration process, this is the first study to have taken a detailed look at friendship patterns among young returnees to the Caribbean. The research showed that establishing friendship patterns was the most vexed issue of adjustment faced by these otherwise economically relatively privileged individuals. The problem was particularly marked by the difficulties female returnees experience in establishing what they regard as worthwhile friendship patterns with indigenous Barbadian women. However, the research conducted suggests that there are at least three social types in respect of forging friendship patterns following migration. The '*Insular Transnational*' showed little or no propensity to form new friendship patterns, due to pre-existing social

embeddedness. The ‘We Are Different’ type was the most commonly identified among the Bajan-Brit returnees, their friendship patterns being forged with other expatriates. The ‘All-inclusive Transnationals’, although forming a small sub-set among our interviewees, can be regarded as the most successful of the Bajan-Brit returnees in cultivating friends based upon both old and newly established networks among both locals and expatriates alike.

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Endnotes

¹ Names have been changed to guarantee anonymity.

² Wilson’s (1969, 1973) ethnography of the moral gendered identities of men and women on the small island of Providencia has been used extensively as a frame of reference to explain and deconstruct Caribbean gendered identities. He maintains that (West Indian) society is based on a dialectic of respectability and reputation. Respectability is rooted in a Eurocentric culture that is the normative concern of elite classes and women and speaks of proper or respectable behaviour. On the other hand, reputation is used to describe male behaviour. Reputation is viewed as a post-colonial response to the inability of West Indian men to attain the prosaic symbols of respectable behaviour. Reputation is the ‘poor man’s riches’ — his virility, bragging about sexual conquest, the fathering of many children and general boasting.

³ An informal banking system

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