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ABSTRACT

I Know Who I Am: a Caribbean woman's identity in Canada
Agency and Resistance in Community Organizing
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The identity of Caribbean women in Canada is often subsumed and homogenized in the concept of "immigrant women" and contributions of these women to Canadian society are erased. This thesis is an inquiry which transforms this picture of an unidimensional image to one of multiple subjectivities and radicalism among forty-six women from the English speaking Caribbean. These women represent diverse heritages; cultures; class positions and different sexual orientation. They have in common their residence in Canada for periods of twenty to thirty years. Their stories demonstrate how these Caribbean women, reinvent their identities, opposing the pathologized victim identity of an 'immigrant woman' by using agency to apply to strategies of education; networking and community organizing. I historicize these experiences from early colonization to modern day political activity in the region. As a result the interconnectedness of their histories becomes apparent and I hypothesize a collective subjectivity. I am then able to interpret their stories with three arguments: (a) home is a site of learning resistance; (b) independence is an ethic in Caribbean female ideology; and (c) an alternative women's movement was formed in Canada to reproduce a Caribbean brand of feminism.
I further argue that this learning at home produced independence as an ethic which empowers them to act on behalf of themselves and their communities. The activities of the women in this study culminated in an ongoing alternative women's movement with strong anti-racist thrust. I conclude that such collective resistance was only possible because home, despite its contradictions and contestations, is an educative education that provided Caribbean women with lessons of independence and resistance.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Telling one's stories to strangers is not always easy for many Caribbean people. I was honoured to have the privilege of listening to the stories forty-five Caribbean women's stories. This thesis would not have been possible without these women's voices relating how they survived. I thank them all most sincerely for this trust in me.

Preparing for and writing a thesis for me was very often like taking part in a sailing expedition. So much of what you do to reach a destination successfully depends on the knowledge of a Captain. My very many thanks to my Captain, Sherene Razack, who provided me with brilliant and sensitive guidance to unpack my ideas. I will always be grateful for her vision in understanding what that destination might be, and in being a friend to care and to encourage me with tact, patience and warmth. The journey in the doctoral program gave me many rich experiences at OISE/UT, for which I thank my many lecturers whose work enlightened and inspired the thesis process. I particularly want to express thanks to Kathleen Rockhill and Alan Thomas who in the beginning felt I could make a contribution. I express my gratitude to the support of my Thesis Committee, each of whom made a unique contribution to my work—Edmund O'Sullivan for direction and words of encouragement, and George Dei for his insightful comments which made me aware of uncovering some unexplored areas. I thank many members of various departments for helping me to use computer and other facilities at OISE/UT. Most of all my fellow students at OISE/UT, particularly, Jane, Florence, Nuzhat, Delia, Donna, Mona and Sheryl, for the camaraderie and intellectual stimulation. When it was time to anchor two people were there to assist: Anne Marie Stewart with her strong and compassionate editing advice, and Larry Brookwell with his caring offer of computer technical assistance. I thank them both sincerely.

To my Trini friends, Grace, Anson, and Geoff in that country, I say, Ent! I also remember with joy my deceased dear friend Daphne, and remain grateful for her love, and her faith in this thesis, to have instructed me in parting that my work has to go to the schools. I also give to Honor Ford-Smith, very many thanks for those many intellectually inspiring creole conversations about "we" region, and the warmth of friendship that went with them. Intellectualizing a Caribbean identity could not be complete without the male view for which I am grateful to Selwyn McLean and Franklyn Harvey. The stimulating and sometimes long conversations were the reprieve after hours of poring over my thoughts. I use to welcome those breaks, and thank many Caribbean people both in Canada, particularly, Norma, Gemma, Hetty, Hermia, Sandra, Phyllis, and abroad Marigold, Maggie and Nel. I also remember with thanks the many sisters of a few chapters of the
Congress of Black Women (Toronto Chapter), in particular Akua and Chloe, whose words of inspiration made me feel very special.

Of course, without the display of the strengths of Aunt Georgie, who has since passed on, I could not have theorize independence. Also, without the lessons of home about the power of education from my deceased Mama (adopted mother) this thesis would not have been possible. At this time, my memories encompass the various homes from which I got tremendous moral support. In Trinidad and Tobago, my first community, where I must thank the Elcocks who acted like surrogate parents, the Robertson clan, the Deschamps and the Serrettes. In the UK, I think of the Sauls. They are my extended family who barely know, I imagine, how much their reassurances even at a distance, helped me to "get troo" this journey. In Gadshill, Canada, I thank the Smiths, particularly Peter John for consistent encouragement and support.

Finally I dedicate this work particularly to Miguel, Lauralee, Leana, Leeard, Clayton, Crystal, Gabriella, Donna Marie, Lisa Marie, Leanna, Alain, Ariana and Jahiani as well as other young people their ages, who possibly will face a variety of complex challenges in the new millennium. They need to know a twentieth century history of Caribbean female resistance.
NOTE

The Use of Nation language

Language as resistance

There are several Creole languages spoken throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, for which there are no standard spellings. I have just chosen a few expressions from Trinidad and Tobago, from Jamaica and from St Kitts, to make introductory statements to each chapter. These words provide me and others with immense possibilities in everyday struggles for survival. I think of Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1990) reminder to immigrants who speak in foreign languages, or variations of dialects of English language. That is, to speak English is to think in that language, to adopt the ideology of the people whose language it is and to be "inhabited" by their discourses (xxii).

I want to register the importance language holds in my mind to the structure of my own study of resistance from perspectives of gender. Also, I must acknowledge that a total expression of thought in standard English, sometimes poses some difficulty for me particularly when I want to engage in an argument. An argument requires the passion of one’s involvement for which, in my case, sometimes expressions of Creole may seem to be more effective. For example, these words uttered by Trinidadian women like, "Ah get troo", meaning, "I made progress", I know, have shaped a reality for them. Sentiments like these are more fully captured in creole or nation language that in standard English.
# CONTENTS

## ABSTRACT

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## NOTE

## CONTENTS

## PREFACE- Mout' open 'tory jump out

I  LOOKING FOR INDEPENDENCE- Dey en know ooo we are

II  THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK- Ow arwe does know

III  METHODOLOGY- Back in time an a whole lot o' we: Caribbean Women as Rebels and Spitfires

IV  RESEARCH DESIGN- How ah do it

V  IMAGINING HOME- Home full o' cankala

VI  HOME IS A SITE OF LEARNING RESISTANCE- Yard tallawa

VII  STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE- We duz get troo, bonjé!

VIII  AN ALTERNATIVE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT- One day, One day congôté

CONCLUSION- Ay, ay--is know, ah know, we!

APPENDIX I- Chart: Multiple identities of Caribbean women

APPENDIX II- Caribbean Women: self-definitions

BIBLIOGRAPHY
My Story

I recall listening to a televised discussion about Caribbean unity in Canada, where one of the key themes was identity. The panel was debating the prevalence of issues of racism that prohibit the emergence of a Caribbean identity, when one woman declared heatedly that, racism aside, "I know who I am!". At that moment, I remembered an incident in which I had felt a loss of my identity. It occurred in a downtown deli, as I sat having a cup of coffee and making some notes. A white woman placed her used tray in front of me. When I glared at her she offered no apology, and I felt enveloped in a destabilizing silence that made me question who I knew I was. Was I who she imagined I was? Such instances of loss of identity persist. They can occur when White people respond in amazement to my knowledge of English literature or European art. They can occur when culturally assimilated Third World people in Canada show little confidence in my abilities to carry out academic or administrative tasks.

Stories like this that link blackness of skin colour to inferiority, are often shared among members of the Caribbean or Black community. They tell about how the self-dignity of Black women can be diminished. Yet, I know, that many of us have overcome negative and degrading images and survived magnificently. My native experience is of the Caribbean brand of racism: colour stratification. This was coupled with economic
insecurity and because I was orphaned, emotional alienation. Against these odds I charted my own course of liberation which made me self-reliant continuously. Born into a mixed class environment—middle-class and working class—in Trinidad and Tobago, I enjoyed the protection of my elders who consisted of many strong women and a few supportive men. None of them dreamed that when I became a young adult, I would take up an immigration option to fill a quota of domestics from the Caribbean to Canada. In some shock, they reacted both positively and negatively. My decision magnified the extent to which our moneyless lives could only fulfil the bare everyday necessities: home, food and schooling. I was a high school graduate, and had passed an entrance examination to achieve a British diploma in librarianship. I recognized that with my conditions of race and class, my own country would be extremely slow in enabling me to reach the sights I set for myself. I wanted to make a difference beyond being identified by the colour of my skin. I came to Canada on the Second Domestic Scheme (at the time, one of the few legal means to do so) with a vision of myself as ambitious and daring, intending to take the risks which would greatly improve my chances of becoming an educated woman, and prepare me for a relatively privileged position in the labour market. My first White employers in Canada saw this ambition in me and initially boasted about my prowess as a teacher/companion to their sons.

After eleven months of dutiful work, I got a job in the Faculty of Law Library of the University of Toronto. I knew no one, I merely responded to an advertisement in the Globe and Mail. The result made me feel that Canada was positively respecting of an individual's skills, and had all the opportunities in the world. Yet I was frightened by my employer's response to my departure from domestic work. I understood from her mother's
housekeeper, that she did not believe I could get a job other than domestic work, particularly in a library. This arrogance threatened my sense of freedom and I feared she might jeopardize my chances. I had only one month more to fulfil my contract in order to receive 'landed immigrant' status. However, she did nothing to stand in my way.

I continued my journey in public libraries, yet the sense of my own blackness was at times overpowering, particularly when I sought housing accommodation. I consciously held on tightly to my tenure in the library service. Within three years of landing in Canada, I began university. I guaranteed my security, physically and financially by becoming a live-in baby sitter in my first year. This restricted my agenda because I was at an age when my search of knowledge went beyond a rigid curriculum. For example, I missed many topical campus lectures held in the evenings, and I lost some networking benefits with other Caribbean people. The restriction of time in return for board and lodging created in me strong feelings of alienation and powerlessness.

Like many of my Caribbean peers, I was dedicated to working hard both at courses and any evening jobs I could get, so I was able to live in residence for the rest of the time. My success in being awarded an undergraduate degree made me think of postgraduate education. I knew I liked to discuss and argue, but I had impressed my philosophy professor to the extent that he recommended me in writing to his department. I nervously read the letter of recommendation that he delivered to me himself. In the end, I abstained from applying because I was edgy about failure in this White male dominated philosophy department. I also knew I had neither financial resources nor the kinds of emotional strength required for coping with adversity. Instead, I applied and entered the Faculty of Library Science, University of Toronto. On reflection, I can see how the lack of economic
independence and racism can influence a Black woman's choice to access areas which she may desire to fulfil her goals.

During my undergraduate years, my activism focused on national independence movements in the Caribbean, and on issues of discrimination in Toronto. I became a member of the Executive of the West Indian Students' Association. This was a politically conscious and eager group of students who never ignored challenges to confront authorities. Yet sexism was a barrier for me as well. I was never nominated President or Vice President even though people constantly recognized my organizing skills and dedication to projects. Caribbean female students were almost equal in numbers to Caribbean males, and many of us were very active in the Association, yet no woman ever became President. I believe, however, that because I was so sure of my own value, my sense of self, that I ignored the female stereotype of passivity, and continued to compete with male peers, who mostly were in the seats of power. Oddly enough, I was nominated Vice-President of the class at Library School, (in that year there was only one other Black woman and the presence of many White middle class women and men was alienating). During that time out of concern about the School's conservatism, and in my capacity as an executive on the Students' Council, I agitated with some of my peers—apparent 'rebels'—for some significant reforms for a community and diversity focused curriculum.

When graduating students were being selected for job interviews, I discovered that the faculty had constructed me as a suitable candidate for a public library. I was sent for interviews in towns outside Toronto. I ignored this, and did my own search in Toronto and succeeded in a job interview at a special library of the Canadian Hospital Association, becoming their first librarian. At this time, too, I began the process of raising public
consciousness at a national level, about literary and artistic works by Caribbean people in Canada. However, I was overcome by the alienating effects of race and gender discrimination in the wider community and by the marginalization that I experienced within my own community. After being in Canada for ten years I took a twenty year sojourn to my birth country, Trinidad and Tobago. Here, I worked in a variety of transformative initiatives in the areas of libraries, adult education and corporate management. My subsequent return to Canada was based on my need to redefine myself through opportunities that would enable me to readily fulfil personal goals. I also wished to free myself from some oppressive situations I faced each day. Thus I gave up a very senior public servant position at "home" and returned eleven years ago with a desire for higher education. Now at this point in my life, I can better understand the conflict between the price of alienation and the value of self-actualization. So I have built a bridge between my 'home' and my 'residence' here. It helps me to feel safe when I must face a narrowly constructed identity of my self in a Canadian setting. To my mind, my story is one of resistance and survival. It is a story of someone who as an "immigrant woman" resists the narrow constraints of victim. Like the television panellist to whom I referred earlier, I can affirm I know who I am.

In many ways, my story is typical of Caribbean women who migrate to Canada. Mainly driven by economic forces, we migrate to Canada in pursuit of education and work, and we find ourselves much too frequently facing racism and sexism. Although destabilized by these oppressions, we maintain a sense of who we are and we survive. In this thesis, I want to explore our stories of survival through themes of identity and
subjectivity. How do we "get troo"? How do we hold on to a sense of self? I propose to make this thesis a collective story of Caribbean women who know who they are.

In order to materialize this story, I begin in Chapter I with an examination of the "identity of Caribbean woman" in Canadian scholarly literature drawing from three categories: general writings on Caribbean migration to Canada; non-Caribbean feminist work on immigration and gender; and Caribbean feminist work on immigration, race and gender. I discover there are few images in the literature that reflect the identity of a Caribbean woman. I also examine imaginative writings by Caribbean women writers in the diaspora, along with a few feminist researchers in the Caribbean region. I use the stories in these writings because I know they narrate what writers know of the lived experiences of Caribbean women. These authors tell us how they see the world Caribbean people live in, and their understanding of this world is crucial to my arguments around how Caribbean women were produced as colonial subjects. My next step, in Chapter II, is to explore notions of identity, subjectivity, agency and resistance as useful concepts that I need to interrogate how Caribbean women survive in Canada. Having established how these notions are useful, I trace a historical process of Caribbean people's presence in the Caribbean region in Chapter III, to justify the diversity in my sample and to historicize these women's experiences from early colonization to the era of political independence in the Caribbean region. As a result of finding there is an interconnectedness of Caribbean women's histories, I hypothesize a collective subjectivity. In Chapter IV, I discuss my research design, detailing my strategies for choosing my sample and analyzing my data. This chapter discusses the limitations, advantages and disadvantages of this study and its differences and similarities with some current scholarly work. At this point I introduce the
profiles of the women in my study. My interpretation of the stories in my sample leads me to three arguments: (a) 'home' is a site where resistance is learned; (b) independence is an ethic in Caribbean female ideology; and (c) an alternative women's movement was formed in Canada to reproduce a Caribbean brand of feminism. Thus in Chapter V, I theorise the notion of 'home' in Caribbean culture, to understand its use as a repetitive theme signifying a site of learning resistance. It is in Chapter VI, that I involve the women's voices to tell how this learning took place in their childhood, and how, for them, independence was observed in the responses of older women to subordination. In Chapter VII I define this notion of independence further exploring themes of assertiveness, resilience and creativity to interpret the stories of the women in my study. I then map how these women struggle for their liberation by employing the strategies learnt at home, networking, education and community organizing in Canada. I demonstrate how these women were agents in different contexts to operationalize these strategies. The particular context of community organizing becomes a foreground in Chapter VIII as it illustrates the major effect that this organizing has on redefining the identity of Caribbean women. It is here I map the process of moving into the particular formations of feminist organizing from which emerges an alternative women's movement. Finally, I conclude by suggesting that the vision of these women has transformed the significance of 'home' to an educative institution, where learning resistance has numerous possibilities for collective survival against oppressive practices. I discuss my hopes for this thesis to serve as a tool in developing a principle of inclusivity by instructing how a Caribbean woman's identity is constructed through the interconnectedness of histories that produce resistance.
This study is important because of the need to add to diasporic studies the critical documentation of stories by Caribbean women. This work can be used to assist the empowerment of women, community activists and younger women. It will help all those who are engaged in transformative work around issues of identity in the diaspora to learn about the emergence of a history of the phenomenon of older women's strengths that created the agency in survival strategies of resistance in Canada. I hope that since the thesis has explored these subjective experiences in order to expose a distinguishing identity, an understanding of what constitutes a Caribbean woman may be improved, in scholarly and popular opinion alike. In addition, I believe the exposure of the interconnectedness of Caribbean women's histories irrespective of different heritages and class backgrounds can transform dominant ideological thinking about identity in the Caribbean. The study has practical significance for inter-Caribbean governmental and community organizations engaged in coalition building and network formations because it provides a methodology for them to formulate effective inclusive strategies. Overall, my hope for this thesis is that it will provide some understanding of gender and agency in community organizing because it explores how Caribbean women worked to transform dominant ideologies of race, class and gender in sites of racism and sexism.

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: Once a person starts saying anything about her/himself, she/he will have to reveal everything. *Cote ce Cote la: Trinidad & Tobago Dictionary (1976).* Compiled and designed by John Mendes. Trinidad and Tobago: Syncreators Ltd.

2. In the colonialism of the Caribbean, identities produced by miscegenation during servitude and slavery, and the diversity of ethnic differences occurring through indentureship and voluntary migration, have been placed on the scale of white, fair-skinned black, brown-black, black etc. with distinct categories for Indian, Chinese, Syrian, Portuguese and so on. Social and economic differences are then determined on this scale.
3. I took the opportunity to emigrate on the Second Domestic Scheme which was a Caribbean/Trinidad and Tobago-Canada that took place in 1956.

4. One of the avenues I considered in thinking about a Masters degree in philosophy was the possibility of teaching at the University of the West Indies, since it was never my intention to live in Canada all my life. At the time, I was informed that there was no such department, and to the best of my knowledge there is still none in the nineties.

5. I use the word "confront" because as infrequently as the times may be that we had to do this, we sought to have face to face discussions with Registrars of Colleges or the University President and others with respect to any ideas we wanted to see implemented to preserve our identity as a Caribbean people.


7. I refer to positions of Secretary or Public Relations Officer which required tasks of organizing meetings and mobilizing people.

8. Much of my community work was done from my apartment between 1963 and 1966, where I was Secretary among a group of artists and writers. In my role as secretary I edited a newsletter, responding to various communication to the Society, and quite frequently I was a guest at interviews on radio and television. During that time as well, on a part time basis I organized the Library of the Chartered Institute of Accountants. This was an exercise which blazed the trail of a librarian doing consultancy work. I recall the shock when I spoke to a few white colleagues about my activities.
CHAPTER I

LOOKING FOR INDEPENDENCE:
CARIBBEAN WOMEN IN SCHOLARSHIP

_Dey en know ooo we are_ ¹

In this Chapter, I begin to contrast my own sense of self with the story of Caribbean women found in Canadian scholarship by examining studies that focus on women and migration. In this extensive foray into the literature, I look for the story of our survival and consider that there is little in these studies to help me explain how we survive and thrive in Canada. I then turn to feminist scholarship in the Caribbean region to examine how research has depicted Caribbean women as subjects. In research studies done in the Caribbean, Caribbean women emerge as subjects who demonstrate a range of responses from insecurity to resourcefulness and self assertiveness. In particular, Erna Brodber's study identifies independence as a common response of Caribbean women to their oppressive situations. I close the chapter with an examination of some imaginative writings of Caribbean women in the diaspora in which I find a recurrence of the theme of independence to characterize the acts of all female characters. I explore this concept as a tool for understanding the experiences of the Caribbean women in my study.
Caribbean women in studies of immigration and settlement. In the pages of scholarly works dealing with issues of migration, Caribbean women lose their diversity and become simply Black women. Grades of skin, differing ethnicities, classes and sexualities all disappear although some stories of resistance survive. For instance, in one of the earliest work to discuss Caribbean migration to Canada, Robin Winks' (1971) *Blacks in Canada*, describes Caribbean people by name and country, portraying them as actively resisting subordination. This work has done much to diffuse the stark facelessness of the traditional concept of the 'immigrant identity'. It puts into focus persons who collectively or individually acted against systemic discrimination, or determined their own paths of success. Winks also puts into perspective the ways in which people accessed education, labour and politics, despite the social barriers that were emerging of race and class for Caribbean immigrants in Canada at that time. The names of women that appear in this work are fewer than men. My own name appears, however, in reference to biographical data and Winks' interpretation of some of my views, as an example of how his work seeks to define a Caribbean woman's identity.²

The experiences of a Trinidadian, Yvonne Bobb, who came to Canada for advance work in library science despite having to serve a year as a domestic to gain admittance were representative. Miss Bobb ... concluded that blacks still had to leave the Dominion (of Canada) if they wished to progress in their work, that the problem of education against prejudice was great in Canada precisely because most Canadians thought that there was no need for education, and that the West Indian students and domestics would have to unite with African students if they wished to be heard (440).

Winks' work covers a historical period from 1628 to 1979, and makes a comprehensive statement about the political significance of Black Caribbean migration to, and their activism in Canada. Brief in comparison but more current, J.K. Krauter and Morris Davis' (1978), *Minority Canadians*, examines the effect of migration on the adaptation of
"Blacks" in Canada. The chapter dealing only with Caribbean people is worth noting because it establishes that Caribbean women outnumber men in some periods of the migration pattern. It attributes the imbalance to the "relative ease" by which "West Indian women" can find employers to sponsor them (47). When the authors discuss the participation of "Blacks" in the labour force they conclude that "service" can be described as "characteristic" of the occupational category of "Blacks" (51). Krauter and Davis emphasize the stereotype of Black Caribbean women as domestic workers.

In Transitions Abroad (1984), Lloyd Brown does not mention women specifically. The importance of the work, however, is in challenging the idea of Canada's capacity to offer Caribbean migrants a haven of economic hope. Brown's arguments draw on the opinions of Black literary men and community leaders to explore reasons for the scepticism that Caribbean people feel about the space they occupy in Canada, as racism escalates with the increase in numbers of immigrants. Wolseley W. Anderson (1993) in Caribbean Immigrants, argues more explicitly about Canada's imperialist responses to the needs of the Caribbean, stressing that the push/pull factors that create migration also contain oppressions of racism. His itemizing of the heritages that make up Caribbean diversity is useful information as well as his historical and socio-demographic analysis of the discriminatory and variant treatment of Caribbean migrants within Canada. Of importance is his recognition of Caribbean people as agents of resistance in the "complex evolutionary process" of immigration policies during the post 1967 period (48). This up to date work, though brief, identifies Caribbean people, by and large, as empowered to resist the neocolonialism and racist policies that they experience both in their region and as migrants to Canada.
There are many other works on Caribbean identity that demonstrate how race played a pivotal role in a longstanding history of migration and settlement for Caribbean people in Canada. Few texts give sufficient information about the struggles of women. The discussions of resistance, however, particularly in Anderson (1993) and Winks (1971) are of relevance to my study. While the identity of these Caribbean migrants has been homogenized, the descriptions and opinions expressed about some experiences of resistance practices, provide glimpses of active agents in social relations in Canada. We learn something about collective subjectivity through the sense that authors make of Caribbean community strategies to survive economically, and to mobilize and organize themselves to resist racism.

Caribbean women are also mentioned as part of the sub-set "Immigrant Women" in studies that examine the status of women. For example, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada in 1970, contains a short two-page discussion of "Immigrant Women". This is where the Report describes and makes recommendations to address some of the problems women migrants encountered, such as housing and employment. References to Caribbean women are included in more general comments about immigrant women—"handicapped" by language difficulties, and "paralyzed" by the system, hence requiring counselling to remedy their problems (387). As an early work about the women's movement it sets a precedent for other analyses that I encountered in my search because of its construction of immigrant woman as 'Other' and as dependent.

In the mid 1980s when the federal government looked at the effect of policies of multiculturalism on immigrant communities, greater efforts were made to render visible
the distinct identities of foreign born women. The report of K. Seydegart and G. Spears (1985) *Beyond dialogue, immigrant women in Canada, 1985-1990*, arose from a national consultation that was called to develop a plan of action to ameliorate the issues of migration for foreign born women settling in Canada. Women from many different social and political backgrounds attended. Many immigrant women's groups were represented throughout the country, including the Congress of Black Women, that confirmed the presence of Caribbean women. A number of fundamental issues were discussed by the participants of this consultation. Out of the proceedings it was important for me to learn that visible minority women rejected the use of the term "immigrant woman", as presented in these words:

> Sometimes I get so angry. All I hear is 'immigrant women, immigrant women' as if we are made with a cookie cutter (7).

In a concrete way, the report shows, foreign born women in Canada resisted the totalizing of "immigrant women", and dramatically broke the silence and passivity ascribed to them. Consequently, the report confirmed the demonstrations of resistance that were occurring as community organizations were formed as their issues were articulated, and as governments were confronted. Finally for my interests in agency and resistance in this study, this document brings two useful pieces of knowledge. First, that immigrant women of all origins made recommendations to the federal and provincial governments to schedule on their agendas "the status of immigrant women and visible minority" so that the role of these women might be examined in the Canadian economy. Next, there was a call for the implementation of employment equity policy and program at the federal level directed at visible minority women as a target group (57).
Canadian Feminist Studies on Immigrant Women. "Immigrant women" as a category of study was increasingly popular from the 1970s onwards. On the whole, such studies focus on race and gender discrimination but not on survival and resistance. One consequence of this focus is that immigrant women in general, and Caribbean women in particular, emerge as a homogenized group of women who are victims of race, gender and class discrimination and not as survivors who creatively transformed their lives.

Non-Caribbean feminists (Macklin 1992; Boyd 1991, 1987, 1986, 1975; Ralston 1991; Ng 1988, 1984, 1981; Ng & Ramirez 1981; Ng & Das Gupta 1981; Winnie Ng 1981; Seydegart and Spears 1985) used the concept "immigrant woman" as a category to discuss the experiences of foreign born women in a system that produces difficulties for them with adaptation and adjustment in the society. By using this concept, their works both homogenize and pathologize identities of individual groups of migrating women from all over the world. Moreover, because the focus is on gender analysis the specific identity of a Caribbean woman is obscured.

Yet, we learn from these scholars about some specific characteristics that emerge from the immigration process. First, Boyd (1991; 1987) and Macklin (1992), without naming Caribbean women, explore issues of legally produced dependency in the immigration system and the exploitation of women who are domestic service workers. Ralston (1991) sees the interlocking systems of race, gender, class and ethnicity are social markers to identify migrant women from Third World countries. Ng (1988), Ng and Das Gupta (1981), Ng and Ramirez (1981) all explore the theme of labour market exploitation as a feature of the socially produced "immigrant woman" that defined her as educationally inferior and places her mainly in the labour force in low-paying jobs. Ng (1981) explores
the social construction of the migrating woman's identity as an "ethnic phenomenon" by the discrimination associated with the stereotype "immigrant woman". This ethnicity only becomes apparent when she enters Canada and becomes the target of exploitation and discrimination in the labour market.

Monica Boyd (1975, 1986, 1991) discusses the restrictive nature of immigration policies that classify women as 'dependents' of men. Focusing on women who speak languages other than English or French, she notes that inherent difficulties occur for these women categorized in the dependent class because of their relations with spouses or male relatives. Her focus erases Caribbean women as a category to be observed as having similar experiences. In 1991 she defined the problem more vividly claiming that issues of dependency produced by immigration policies disadvantage women in the area of employment and in gender relations in the home (2). In the context of gender relations because of the sponsorship program, Boyd (1991) argues that dependent women become vulnerable to abusive or inappropriate situations. They, she continues, can place total reliance wrongly or rightly on their sponsors. But, she reasons, "dependency relations does not mean that women who are affected are passive victims" (5). On the contrary, she describes their organizing a Foreign Domestic Movement. This movement enables them to act as agents of change "to remove problems" that are associated with the injustices arising out of immigration policies (9). Boyd's focus on the Foreign Domestic Movement describes the activities of women from the Philippines. She does not examine activities of Caribbean domestic workers, many of whom by then had been in Canada for a long time.
Audrey Macklin's (1992) focus is similar to Boyd's (1991). Macklin argues that the legitimacy of the Foreign Domestic Worker program establishes a gender hierarchy of female/domestic and the female/employer where some sort of co-dependency relations exist. This work subsumes the stereotypical image of "black" as domestic service worker with the idea of victim. Hence, Macklin suggests that immigration policies may have legitimised the subordination in this mistress/servant relationship. That is, the gendered nature of housework influences the "matrix of domination" (to borrow Collins' (1990) term) and produces ideas of victims. She writes,

... the negation of the domestic worker's autonomous identity, the casual disregard of contractual and/or statutory obligations in favour of "informal" arrangements dictated by the employer's will-these are the indicia of a reversion from employee to servant status (748-749).

While Boyd (1991) and Macklin (1992) prefer to emphasise gender as producing the victim of the "immigrant woman", other scholars have looked at the impact of interlocking systems of race, class, gender and ethnicity on issues of identity.

Helen Ralston's (1991), Race, Class and Gender and Work Experiences, study is based on a sample of one hundred and one immigrant women in Atlantic Canada. Ralston's intent is to show how these systems construct migrant women subjectivities to produce specific relationships for these women in the society. These migrant women, few of whom entered as independents, experience their lives mainly in gender subordination and dependence on men. This experience is more significant to them than lack of access to professions. Though professionally qualified, the isolation from a social and work environment does not improve their status, except when they are prepared to devalue their professional worth by engaging in unpaid labour or low paying jobs to reduce levels of boredom. Generally the study endorses the "interconnectedness of gender, race, ethnicity
and class" in the lived experiences of working immigrant women, with gender being most salient (137).

Miedema Baujke and Nancy Nason Clark (1989), in Fredericton, make a similar connection in a study that examines whether or not language quickened the adjustment of "immigrant women" or served as a means of assimilation. They interviewed twenty-two foreign born women, visible minority and white. They found that these women are mostly discriminated against because of their accent or colour that designates them as "foreigner" (63). The study is not clear about the composition of the group, "visible minority". The authors conclude that the concept "immigrant woman" inevitably creates part of the identity of women from outside Canada. This is partly because visible minority women in public situations experience slightly more exaggerated difficulties than White women do in the same situations. These scholars see the issues as adaptation and settlement, not racism. As they observe in their concluding remarks,

despite the differences amongst immigrant women, in terms of their countries of origin, their ability to speak English and the color of their skin, the interview data suggest that the biggest hurdle these women face is "being an immigrant". (71)

Similar to Baujke and Nason Clark, Roxana Ng and Judith Ramirez (1981) Immigrant housewives in Canada, interviewed twenty-three well-educated women from four continents between 1976 and 1980, They conclude that women are stereotyped as "immigrant women" regardless of divergence in their national and cultural backgrounds, because they share similar experiences especially when they speak English. Thus the authors claim,

one must draw the conclusion therefore that "being an immigrant woman" seems to be a more important factor in the case of discrimination than
belonging to a visible minority group or not being able to speak English
(70).

Roxana Ng and Tania Das Gupta (Non-Caribbean) in *Nation builders?* (1981) see
a specific identity formation constructed for other non-English speaking women of the
dependent class. While the study does not specify the racial or national identity of these
women, it suggests they originate from European peasant economies. These women are
accustomed to domestic traditions of such economies, yet they are forced to become
workers outside the home and be "more integrated into a money economy" (84). They are
marked to be recruited in service industries in low paying jobs as a "captive labour force".
However, their contributions are unrecognized in the Canadian economy, because despite
their capacity to earn, they remain "dependent" and are considered "secondary earners",
even though their earnings are essential to sustain the family's purchasing power (85).

Ng's subsequent study theorizes how the migrant identity is constituted. In her
*Constituting ethnic phenomenon; an account from the perspective of immigrant woman*, Ng
(1981) recognizes a research phenomenon of homogenizing and pathologizing an
immigrant woman's identity. She notes:

> conventional research proceeds on the assumption that visible differences
> are criteria for determining ethnicity. In this procedure, ethnicity as a set
> of social relations is obscured. It draws on the observable features of
> "ethnic groups" (e.g. language and customs) and does not attend to people's
everyday lives (97).

Social research endorses the socially constructed identity of foreign born women, and
ignores a historical analysis of experiences of these women in their countries of origin.
Social research treats the difficulties these women might have in communication and
acculturation as if they are caused by 'ethnicity'. This research also regards these
difficulties as problems that the women bring. Consequently, according to Ng, studies view
interactions within Canadian everyday experiences as unproblematic for migrant women. Therefore, foreign born women in Canada are given identities that are deemed appropriate to their positions of difference within their various ethnicities. In Ng's view the chief cause of this construction of ethnicity is labour exploitation, that creates a condition for prejudice and discrimination. In other words, a cycle of effects, produced around the identity "immigrant woman", is responsible for the way researchers and community workers can homogenize and stereotype identities. "Certain characteristics" become an integral part of migrant women's identity, in the way that a black skin does for Caribbean women. Therefore, Ng asserts, we need to examine "how these differences are constituted as ethnic differences" (106).

Ng's practical example of this theory is her (1988) *The Politics of Community Services*, where she clearly defines the concept "immigrant woman" as a socially constructed stereotype in Canada, that often excludes White women. Identity for immigrant women is summed up in these terms: a woman of colour-"black or Asian", with English-speaking difficulties, in a cleaning or factory job (15). That is generally a perception held for Third World women, but not for European white women migrating to Canada. Analyzing the operations of an employment agency, she shows the roles of the state and labour market to organize women as a labour market "commodity", resulting in the expropriation of these women's real selves. Counsellors shape their skills and abilities to meet market demands for cheap labour. Ng's (1988) conclusive findings are that while women resist, they are controlled by the effect of manipulative practices and "contradictory processes" of the dominant group. So the ability to chart their own courses on the labour market becomes limited (91-93).
Although some studies mainly suggest the victimization of 'immigrant women' produced by discrimination, evidence of their resistance sometimes appears. In Winnie Ng’s (1982) contribution to *Still ain’t satisfied!* We see that migrant women resist by community organizing. She too recognizes the social construction of the "immigrant woman" identity, and reminds us that resistance to race and gender discrimination takes place even though visible minority women as a group are both heterogeneous and fragmented.

Winnie Ng notes that while visible minority women often fear "consequences of political activism" given their experiences of "double exploitation in domestic and employment situations", they persevere in their efforts at community organizing (252). In seeking liberation from the 'immigrant woman' identity, Ng looks at solidarity with the white women’s movement as a means of reducing marginalization when she writes,

What is obviously needed is improved communication between the women’s movement and the immigrant women’s community so that the problems of each can be more fully understood and appreciated (255).

Thus she advocates coalition building as a means of resistance to a standard of segregation based on race and practised in the women’s movement. This then completes the review of non-Caribbean scholars in Canada that critique the notion of 'immigrant women' identity.

When Caribbean scholars, (Calliste 1993, 1989; Brand 1984; Silvera 1983) whose body of works is considerably less, write on the same issues, they try to deconstruct the concept "immigrant woman" by creating a monolithic race category: Black. This does not capture the multiple identities of Caribbean women in categories of race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation. However, they analyze Canada’s immigration policies to show how Caribbean women are victimized and how these women at times have engaged in activities of resistance. Their focus is to show how interlocking systems of racism and sexism define
a collective identity for migrant women from the Caribbean, that produces a homogenized 'Black' and 'immigrant woman' identity (Calliste 1993; 1989; Brand 1984; Silvera 1983). When they explore the subjective experiences of Caribbean migrant women, they show that race and gender can never be separated: Caribbean women continuously experience double oppressions. Because of the scholars' need to emphasize race, however, I do not find in this analysis the fullness of an identity that I see in myself.

The studies of Agnes Calliste's *Canada's immigration policy and the domestics from the Caribbean*, (1989 and *Women of Exceptional Merit* 1993) that analyze the enforcement of Canada's immigrant policies, show how Caribbean women resisted a stereotypical image of passivity and accommodating behaviour. For example, according to Calliste (1989), there was

the perception of Caribbean women as career domestics [that] was based on discrimination in the labour market and the stereotypical perception of black women as domestics (143).

This thinking proved to be in error, because government officials were disappointed over "the high mobility rate" out of the service particularly during a period of labour market downturns (145). This job turnover indicates the agency in the activities of Caribbean women to find opportunities suitable to their qualifications.³

When Calliste (1993) writes of the immigration of Caribbean nurses to Canada, she illustrates the "web" of manipulations and contradictions that are contained in immigration regulations to produce a "specific space for black women" (87). Nurses themselves showed agency, as professionals, in the ways they circumscribed this "web", by first negotiating their admissions to Canada as professionals to gain employment. Then, having been admitted, they organized themselves both in Toronto and Quebec, supported by the Black
community to "resist racism in the workplace" that had prohibited their access to enter the health care professions (86). However the stringency of immigration policies enabled health institutions to reject the qualifications of Caribbean nurses, on the basis of "de-skilling" (99). Yet, as Calliste points out, subsequent monitoring of trainees by Canada’s Immigration Department, "produced some evidence to challenge the stereotypes about Caribbean women", that is, reports declared "many of them were indeed exceptional" (99). While Calliste’s (1993) examination of the experiences of Caribbean nurses helps us erase some of the static image of a Caribbean migrant woman, it retains the homogeneity that centralizes "Black". A few works which support Calliste’s efforts and enable us to hear directly the stories of Caribbean women’s survival and resistance, will form the focus of the discussion that follows.

Makeda Silvera’ Silenced (1989) addresses, as my study intends to do, how women lived the realities of immigration policies. Silvera’s study uses the testimonies of ten Caribbean women’s experiences while in domestic service work. These "herstories" from women who work as domestic service workers in Canada, uncover areas of personal identity, for example, ambitions and goals that are suppressed in other writings about immigrant women. They serve as a supplement to analyses done in scholarly works that critique discrimination practices in the system. However, Silvera's (1989) collection, describes women's lives as domestic service workers and notes the victimization of these women, and the feelings they themselves have of being victims, trapped between poverty in their home country and total exploitation in Canada. She does not discuss women who managed to leave their oppressive situations.
Silenced, unintentionally, does not interrogate how historical discourses constituted these women's stories in order to enable us to understand how they come to occupy current subject positions. Even though the work includes oral history to resist the traditional academic approach to methodology, it has not fully deconstructed the static image of a Caribbean woman as "Black" and in domestic service. The whole idea of "Black" remains indistinguishable from "Caribbean". Like Calliste' works, Silvera's shows racist oppressions are a prominent feature in the lives of Caribbean women, from which they struggle to survive with varying strategies of resistance.

Dionne Brand in 1984, Black Women in Toronto: Gender, Race and Class, similarly names "Black" as synonymous of Caribbean when she analyses migration, labour, gender and the construction of sexuality, as intersecting categories producing pressures in the everyday lives of these women. She has provided us with an intensive profile of a Caribbean woman in the diaspora, that contains features of independence, and strategies of resistance through education and community. Contrary to the dependency feature in migration analyzed by non-Caribbean feminists, Brand's work accounts for the majority of Caribbean women who migrated independently and set up households, becoming primary income earners. In this context, it resonates with Calliste's facts about the early evidence of self-reliance of Caribbean women as domestic service workers and nurses. Also Brand points out that for these women work is a "condition of their race" (35). That is, Black women have historically been defined in sites of capitalism and labour outside the home. Their situation contradicts any conventional and prevailing ideas of a domesticated woman with the home as her domain.
Brand's (1984) profiling of the Black woman demonstrates how her subjectivity was constructed in resistance to racism and sexism. This aspect comes very close to my own work. For instance, Brand writes of the urgency for education in the lives of Black women for raising self-esteem and for racial upliftment. She also ties education to their history of resistance to enslavement. She also draws on anecdotes from older Black women's "wisdoms" that motivate younger women to carry on a legacy of economic independence in resistance to enslavement through gender relations (35). For example, the independence she writes about manifests itself in the structure of "woman-built systems". That is, kinship and friendship networks expand into a community. Initially, these networks are organized by Black women in the private sphere to provide solidarity and support, and to centralise the rearing of children (36). From these sites of achieving education and building networks, Brand explores Black women in Toronto who have done community organizing to resist racism and sexism in immigration policies. She refers to organizing of the 1978 case of the deportation of ten Black women, whose children were not included in their applications as domestic service workers. This case, for her, is evidence of the historical construction of Black women's sexuality and their resistance to it. Black women, she notes,

did not have the right to children, did not have the right to be sexual, and that punitive action would be "justly" taken if these rights were exercised (40).

Brand makes the following points: having Black women seen simply as migrants enables society to construct their invisible identities; when, specifically, the Black woman's actions and contributions are analyzed we can find an identity that is in contradiction to White notions of femininity; and Black women's survival through resistance to racism and sexism
perpetuates a history of community organizing. Brand approximates my theoretical approach in that she seeks to analyze how the identities of women in her study have been historically produced.

**Concluding: an understanding of the review:** On the whole, the Non-Caribbean feminists, (Macklin 1992; Boyd 1986, 1991; Ralston 1991; Ng 1987, 1988; Ng and Das Gupta 1981; Winnie Ng 1982) stress the socially produced dependency of the "immigrant woman". Their works inform us more about the link between immigration policies and notions of race, class, and gender than about migrant women's multiple subjectivities. The centrality of the dependency issue in their analyses, may be appropriate for viewing issues surrounding the category of sponsored migrant woman. The majority of women, however, that migrated from the Caribbean have different stories. Many of them, like myself, have related stories in which they arrived independently and maintained their self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, the centralising of 'relations of dependency' as an issue in sexism, is in conflict with notions of resistance in the studies of Calliste 1993; 1989; in the oral narratives in Silvera (1989); and in the analysis of subjectivity by Brand (1984). These works expose that there is resistance in the lives of the women they analyzed complicated with the intersectionality of race, class, gender and sexuality. This suggests an idea for an analysis of a notion of independence that transcends a focus on gender as the basis for defining identity or investigating dependency.

In summary, these studies in the Canadian scholarly literature barely pay attention to a fully integrative view of "immigrant women". Some scholars pay attention to gender, others stress state regulations of migrant labour or adaptation and settlement. Few give full emphasis to agency and resistance, the approach I wish to take. In feminist work on
Canadian immigration policies and women, some of these partial perspectives survive that pay close attention to gender. This body of work as well, as it chooses to address some specificities, conveys a sense that an "immigrant woman identity" remains pathologized. Hence agency and resistance are absent. I find few traces in these bodies of literature of the woman I know myself to be.

**Caribbean feminist social science studies:** The analysis that follows examines what the Caribbean region has produced. First I examine some social research studies by Caribbean women scholars in the region, and then some imaginative writings in the body of literature published by Caribbean women in the diaspora. I do this because I know that currently many of these works construct Caribbean women as active subjects, not silenced. As a result, they occasion fewer erasures than male-stream works of the Caribbean region. In addition, I see the context of the region as a factual background that complements the lived experiences of Caribbean Canadian women in the diaspora. Also, I think that the imaginative literature, with its mix of home and foreign contexts, may well reflect how significant issues of residency and migration have formed their consciousness and particular subjectivities in the lives of Caribbean women.

I turned to Caribbean scholarship in order to find work that materialized Caribbean women as full subjects, with stories that go beyond racism and discrimination. I wanted to discover more about survival and resistance. I selected the first female-centred research in the region, established in response to concerns about the 'woman situation' by governments and international agencies. It was entitled, *Women in the Caribbean Project* (WICP), and reported in 1986. This research used unstructured interviews and observational techniques to collect qualitative and quantitative data from 1578 Caribbean
women between the ages of 20 to 64. It was located in four Anglophone countries of the Caribbean region. I chose the works of Christine Barrow in Barbados; Dorian Powell in Barbados, St Vincent and Antigua; Erna Brodber in Jamaica; and Stella Odie-Ali's in Guyana, whose findings involve the same WICP themes. The studies demonstrate a thematic structure that includes how some Caribbean women survived economically; how they were empowered to do so; and how they maintained emotional support to earn their survival. Joycelin Massiah (1986) in making an overview of the study asserts that Caribbean women's efforts to survive produced a multidimensional character of Caribbean women's lives rather than a "static concept of 'status'" (6). Certain themes in the subjects's stories were explored: "sources of living; emotional support; and power and authority" (10). As a result the findings of these studies expose agency, independence, and resistance, that are key to my theorizing a Caribbean woman's identity.

I was able to obtain an understanding about identity that involves resistance and survival at sites of acute economic repression, and link them to Caribbean women's ambivalent attitude to autonomy in gender and social relations (Barrow 1986; Odie-Ali 1986). For instance, Barrow (1986) found that these women in a variety of unions with male partners, retained "considerable autonomy especially in economic matters" and that the quality of the union depended on mutual "reciprocal obligations" (138, 139). She also found that the multiple ways these women chose to survive, limited their chances of social mobility. Opportunities to improve their educational status were considerably less. However, their hard work to provide for their children were considered an investment in their own future security. These strategies for survival rotated around the multiple roles that they had to carry out in conjugal unions, in maternal responsibilities, and in duties of
work. Yet, they valued the individualism associated with their negotiating these roles, and placed much emphasis on the aspects of community solidarity that complemented their autonomy. In spite of all of this, one of the conclusions of the report concerns the persistence of Caribbean women's lack of self-esteem. Their persistent dilemma is that they remain dependent on men, while they are aware of their potential to improve their positions in the wider world.

In Guyana, Odie-Ali (1986) researched the lives of African and Indian women in agricultural farming and produced slightly different findings. These women farmers similarly "performed a multiplicity of roles in the course of their daily living" in a range of contexts from the private, home, to the public, work and community (254). This study found there was a "high incidence of female decision making on matters pertaining to farm management" (269). The collective skill of Guyanese women to negotiate strategies in agricultural management produces inconsistencies and conflicts, Odie-Ali finds, so that she cannot suggest a common theme of identity. On the one hand, these women see themselves as self-reliant, making important income contributions to the household. On the other hand, they are vulnerable dependents in their relationships with men, upholding a gendered role as nurturer.8

Powell (1986) examined Caribbean women's perspective of family life and experiences. Her report concludes that "family in terms of conjugal relationships, motherhood and child-rearing" represents "an important dimension" in the lives of these women (121). In arriving at such a conclusion, her findings show that marriage was paramount, and some of these women believed that the "traditional role was woman's 'natural destiny'" (88). Yet women experiencing common-law or non-residential unions
set high standards for accepting marriage from male partners, and they criticised the boundaries that marital life placed on their aspirations. The study also showed a pattern of concentration of married women in the professions and technical services in all three countries, Barbados, St. Vincent and Antigua. These women still, however, cited "husband/partner as their main means of support" (101). Here again, there was a contradiction in that subjects name men as household heads even when their life histories, according to Powell (1986) portrayed them as assertive and achieving women.

Thus the findings of Barrow (1986); Odie-Ali (1986) and Powell (1986) are that Caribbean women's lived experiences in the region produce ambivalence towards traditional gender roles, and there is no clear process of their own self-definition. While these studies inform us of the multiple contexts in which women in the Caribbean region negotiate their survival, their findings do not present a clear indication that these women are conscious of their own empowerment. As Patricia Anderson (1986) in writing the conclusion of these reports says,

In summary, the project shows that while on the one hand, Caribbean women, have a strong sense of their equality with men, and they strive to be independent or at least interdependent in their relationships with men, on the other hand, they recognise that they must often accept male domination and a male-dependent role (311).

This gap between a desire for autonomy and the impossibility of gaining equality with men seems to challenge the idea that independence can be theorized in a Caribbean female ideology. It is possible that the idea of independence crystallized in my mind, because I found another contribution to the on-going research of the Women in the Caribbean Project where this idea of independence was affirmed and defined.
**Affirming independence.** Brodber's (1986) work, *Afro-Jamaican women at the turn of the century*, analyses experiences of resistance among 45 Jamaican women in the post-emancipation period. This study affirmed my search to find 'independence' as distinguishing of a Caribbean woman's identity. It also provides an analysis of gender for the Women in the Caribbean Project.

Brodber found her group of women were self-sufficient. They chose to live in female households together, irrespective of individual liaisons with men. Yet they saw a standardized division of gender roles as a stabilising feature in female/male relationships. Brodber named this phenomenon, independence. She concludes that it results from their having to live in many different situations, and defines it thus:

> the predilection for making and acting on one's own decisions and depending on self while assessing how others may be pressed into assisting her (23).

Brodber's (1986) theorizes only on the basis of experiences of freedwomen of the working class. She suggests the existence of 'independence' as an idea in a Caribbean female ideology. As a result, I felt I could specify it as a feature in the concept of resistance and extend my search for the best possible definition. I chose to read several imaginative writings by Caribbean women writers both in the Caribbean region and the diaspora. I did this because I believe that these are works are crucial to my analysis, and I felt they would amount to narrations by the only voices able to deconstruct imperialist representations of identities of a Caribbean woman (Said 1993).
Caribbean imaginative literature and independence. I thought I could find my own experience in the imaginative literature. I anticipated as well that this literature would reflect my own knowledge of some Caribbean women's actual experiences of resisting domination. I have heard testimonies of resilience in some Caribbean women's strengths to extricate themselves from endangered situations to survive. I know that all Caribbean woman are not able to cross the dangerous boundaries established in systems of patriarchy and imperialism. From time to time, however, depending on the context, many Caribbean women may be self-assertive and resist oppressive practices. I chose a selection of writers who address these issues of liberation and particularly those who discuss diasporic Caribbean women. For example, in Jamaica Kincaid's (1990) *Lucy*, the protagonist, like myself, worked as a domestic service worker and had a sophisticated relationship with employers. I am able to affirm some truths in that story. Like the studies in the Caribbean region that I earlier discussed, there is less of an outsider's invention and more of an insider's reflection or documentation of truths. Such fictional accounts are more like "fact-fiction" according to Beryl Gilroy (1990).

I selected ten authors of fiction, short stories and poetry. In these Caribbean women's writings a theme of gender resides and produces several sub-themes such as mothering and community. I found repeatedly that the female characters were cast as acting independently in terms of their liberation either from economic or emotional pressure.9 My choice of writers include Caribbean women who wrote in the diaspora of Canada, England and the United States. They are: Althea Prince (1994), and Jamaica Kincaid (1991) (*Antigua*); Jean Rhys 1976 (*Dominica*); Mahadai Das 1988 (*Guyana*); Patricia Powell

In these authors' stories, female characters are made to use independence, that I now introduce as an ethic, in order to take personal responsibility in their actions. They manipulate power in order to negotiate oppressive social relations. That is not to say that the use of this ethic guarantees for any one of them permanent security and a uniform life situation. In more ways than one, these characters end up in a "no-win" situation. In this world of gendered and racist practices, reflected in these stories, female characters experience many pitfalls. The point to be made is that they have courage always to assume personal responsibility for their survival. They do not succumb to subordination and victimization. I will interpret examples from the literature that follow to support this notion of the use of the ethic of independence.

Caribbean women's fiction introduces the idea that when they become mothers some Caribbean women have to cope in non-traditional ways beyond routine caring for offspring. Brand's (1988) story, *Photograph*, tells us this. Narrated in the first person, it is about a girl child socialized in her grandmother's care to understand gender roles in a household that contains many grandchildren.

None of us could recollect our mothers, except as letters from England or occasional visits from women who came on weekends and made plans to take us, eventually to live with them. The letters came from England every two weeks and at Christmas with a brown box full of foreign smelling clothes (57).

This form of mothering in Caribbean communities has been constructed by the economic needs of most families in order to resist structural adjustment policies. Thus, Brand's (1988) 'mother' is among a number of women who live and work in industrialized
countries, and who expect to have "well brought up children" on returning. The grandmother's lauding of the mother's accomplishment "up in foreign" plus the community's response of awe and respect, helps to nurture the child's formation of a white image of her mother (69). This story informs us that a woman's use of independence may be sanctioned and supported by others. In the case of mothering, biological mothers are independent and still retain strong ties to their children.

In Joan Riley's (1987) Waiting in the twilight one female character is also an absent mother who explains her choice to be away from home. Like Brand's mother, her reason is partly about economic independence. The story goes that in England there is Lisa, an independent-minded character, whose husband and children are left in Jamaica, and who often exclaims to her best friend, Adella, the protagonist, "Girl, a like me freedom!" Her freedom means that her life in England is a practice of self-reliance in order to improve as an economic provider, and be less active in routine nurturing. When Adella probes Lisa's repeated comment to find what feelings she holds about her separation from her children, Lisa laughs with vitality, saying,

Of course a miss de children, but, chile, a can do better fa dem if dey stay wid me mada till a find a place dat a want. Nobady gwine pawn off no bruckdown place pan me jus tru dem know a desperate (23-24).

Being a victim of colonialism is integral to the meaning of these defiant words that describe her subject position. She is attempting within the constraints of capitalism to sustain in separate spaces a dual responsibility for herself and her children. Her special caring percolates through her strength, when Riley has her continue,

But a tell ya dis, if dat goodfanuting man eva come ya like ihm treaten a would bring ova de pickney dem fore yu could say baps (24).
In other words if her husband became irresponsible towards her children, she would with great urgency her children to England. The emphasis in her life is to achieve proper living conditions for her children. Until that materializes, she will experience relative freedom. Brand’s (1988) and Riley’s (1987) mothers redefine mothering as a site where they show the "necessity of self-reliance and independence" to survive (Collins 1990:118). They are absent from a familial home in order to meet a need for self-fulfilment and to establish a physical base for their children. Their situations are the result of colonial systems in their own countries.

In Caribbean women’s writings this need for some Caribbean women to explore their talents of self-assertiveness is also present when these women remain on location of the family household as the characters in Cooper (1992) and Silvera (1991) demonstrate. First, Afua Cooper’s poem (1992) Mother offers a strong multi-dimensional image, and clearly shows the interweaving of roles from emotional dependence (wife) to economic independence (self). She writes,

My mother planted fields
married a man
bore ten children
and still found time
to run her own business (26).

The dynamics of mothering include both procreating and self-actualizing. They also involve knowing how to negotiate values around class standards that censure women. So Cooper continues the story of going with the mother to "work the plot of land" and,

we heard the missionary’s car
coming down the road
she jumped over a culvert to hide
because she had on a pair
of my father’s pants
the church disapproved of women
wearing men's clothing (26)

Having said that, Cooper makes us think that this mother's power at creativity is associated with a history of lives in her past, as she writes,

she had to rush home
to cook the family's meal
she seemed able to do anything
and I think that in one
of her past lives
she was a leader of some sort (26)

Caribbean women writers also introduce independence as a feature in their characters' lives when they explore ideas of sexuality. Silvera's (1991) Confirmation addresses the issue of discrimination in the community by having her mother-character do the standard things for women, as well as express a masculine identity. When Mama in her story assertively fulfils her many roles, it confuses some in her community as they do not subscribe to womanhood in a patriarchal structure. Her daughter's claim is,

Mama didn't look like half-woman half-man to me and I hated when the women on the street whispered so... It didn't puzzle me that Mama talked politics, drank white rum like a man, knitted and crocheted, tended her flowerbed and baked the best cakes and sweets that were sold in all the shops in our neighbourhood (28).

Other Caribbean women authors show that in confronting masculine perspectives of womanhood their female characters are put at risk. They show that women take the risk and struggle for the right to be themselves.

In Jean Rhys (1966) Wide Sargasso Sea, the advice that the character of Christophene, a freedwoman, gives to the white looking and younger woman, Antoinette, suggests that sexual freedom and economic independence go hand in hand. The direct advice to leave a despicable husband, is resisted by the romantic younger woman. This advice, however, may be relevant to the older woman's experience of ignoring rules of
monogamy, and her knowledge that she herself is industrious enough to provide her own material support. Christophene embodies emotional and economic independence:

She spat over her shoulder. 'All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man' (91).

In *Deceived or Deceiving*, a love poem, Mahadai Das (1988), writes about a woman who recognizes her victimization. While she acknowledges her experiences of the ways that discursive systems are gendered both in politics and personal relationships, she encourages herself to think beyond her status of a 'victim'. She retaliates with assertiveness to suggest deception is everywhere:

> When you come to me from the roof, climbing through my multiple windows, parachuting into my bed at midnight like a trained soldier or adventurer when you leave before you have come, and arrive after you have left I am unperturbed Instead, I marvel at your consistency, I wonder that the world's remainder is deceived or undeceiving. (20)

Jamaica Kincaid (1991) also uses the context of male/female relationships. The young female lead character, Lucy, erases the passion of romantic love in order to survive. As she tries to sort out memories of her past and her sexuality, she discovers in the present, that relationships with men are mainly to fulfil her current sexual desires. Intimate relationships have no bearing on her perception of her future self. When she finds her lover is having an affair with her roommate, she comments,

> I only hoped they would not get angry and disrupt my life when they realized I did not care (163).
The disclosures made by women characters in Das' poem, and in Lucy, demonstrate a masking of pain and disappointment, and a portrayal of a strength of purpose. The point is, however, that even while using independence to resist, the woman does not lose the pain of the wound directly, even when she becomes a victor. I will now further discuss how other authors continue to demonstrate and elaborate on this idea of independence as creating a situation for a Caribbean woman to survive on a thin edge.

I selected Prince (1993); Brand (1988); Espinet (1992); and Powell (1993), in that order, to examine how penalty, a corollary of independence, manifests itself in violence, where there are struggles with issues of gender. Althea Prince (1993) in Body and Soul, constructs a portrait of Delores, an independent female character, Black Caribbean, who has succeeded professionally and materially. She writes

She had gone after and got the right training, the right house, the right clothes, the right car. She had gone after the right man, too, only to meet him when it was too late. She had bought the right home only to have an intruder destroy her feelings of peace (101).

Delores independently has resisted the black immigrant stereotype by being a white collar worker with a home in a city's residential district. However, her romantic history is plagued with failure and her relations with family are pitiful. As she lies on her bed one night, the discovery that a White male stalker sprawls on her partly skylighted roof and stares at her is a devastating experience. The whole confrontation weakens her resilience and causes her to review the intense loneliness that progressively is engulfing her. Her life amounts to very limited romantic relations. She has no immediate family as opposed to her degrees, career, house and a car. The contradiction alarms her and she commits suicide. The symbol of the White man in Prince's (1993) story is about the overarching influence of racism and sexist domination. He is on the roof. The story informs us that a female's
significant responses to resist these oppressions to survive is not always triumphant. Those very responses can be disempowering. Thus strategies of survival to escape subordination and violence have to be seen in terms of a variety of negotiations and manipulations.

Dionne Brand (1988), in one of her short stories, illustrates another variety of strategies to resist domination. She constructs a female character, Blossom, in a short story by the same name, who defies being stripped of the value she places on herself, when she embarrasses her employer over an incident that she alleges is sexual assault. Blossom's White male employer in Toronto who had been "eyeing her" for a long time, enters the basement where she is completing her menial work and tries to hold her. Brand describes her response:

...she grab on to he little finger and start to squeeze it back till he face change all colour from white to black and he had to scream out. Blossom sheself start to scream like all hell break loose, until the wife and children run downstairs too. It ain't have cuss, Blossom ain't cuss that day (33).

Blossom's exaggerated behaviour is to write her own history of self-reliance and pride. She is her own agent so she survives this incident by leaving the domestic service. But efforts to socialize without sexual harassment is useless, so she switches the struggle to the site of marriage. When she finds romance she marries and behaves devotedly to her spouse. When she realizes her efforts at maintaining marital stability is deepening into gender exploitation, she quits. She again takes personal responsibility for herself, contemplates, and forcibly orders her husband to leave. She has her freedom again, that she uses to withdraw into intense self-evaluation. Blossom finally emerges as a woman filled with spiritual power. She enters the struggle once more with a new self-definition and an agenda to continue her use of independence without losing dependence on community. Brand makes Blossom a night pub entrepreneur and a spiritualist, "Oya, Goddess of winds,
storms and waterfalls" from that positions she gains recognition from "Black people in Canada" because she is an Obeah woman and she has arrived at "prosperity" (41).

Ramabai Espinet (1992), in her characterization of females in a complex short story *Barred: Trinidad 1987* also deals with the use of transformative practices of resistance. She explores an identity of an Indian Caribbean woman through stream of consciousness vignettes about female experiences. Their contexts are in the Caribbean (home) and Canada (foreign) as well. In the first vignette, the female character is protecting herself in a room at 'home' for which she has lost her keys. Though she is experiencing fear about what maybe an adverse result of this, she recalls the time in Canada when she "suddenly" found "the mad urge to fling all valuables down" into a river (80). Thus begins the construction of a radical subjectivity. The act is a metaphor for the abandonment of that responsibility imposed on her as woman in order to control her. "Meager" valuables can be barriers in the route to acquiring personal freedom. She is thinking of defining herself differently, outside the gendered construct of 'woman' as passive victim, dependent on the male. Espinet draws this character in a vulnerable state, grappling with a loneliness that ought not to be, in terms of the definition of an Indian woman as coupled with a man. This woman, however, is intent on thinking that she could deconstruct this static image. She confesses, "that impulse [to change] has resurfaced over and over". This suggests the thought itself is empowering her. She knows there is strength to be attained in being independent minded. The irony lies in the potential consequences. So Espinet has her wonder, "but what would I have done without them?" (80).

The woman is haunted by the trauma of being alone as she faces this predicament in the current location. She knows she has to be responsible for securing her body. She
knows that male sexuality produces central power in terms of her own desire, so she can understand the implications of an unwanted man, returning or arriving. Hence she strategizes how to guard against this intrusion, and this symbolically, is resistance to the appropriation of her personal space. She is resolved to take up whatever available choice there is to prevent any total victimization. She plots,

I have no idea, but under my bed I keep a tin of insect repellent which I am told is good for spraying in their eyes. I also possess an old walking stick, a rape alarm with a light on it, and some candles and some matches (81).

It is her belief that she has the courage to eliminate the aggressive intruder. This is the courage that goes with her vision of self-reliance, that is valuable to her, because she wants to "possess a spirit of independence" (Collins 1990: 109). What damage will it do to her integrity as a person, as she opts to be on her own? How far will she go to show she wants to be left alone? However, dawn breaks and we meet her envisioning the strategies that will bring her hope and, suggesting that shifting to a new self is never complete.

The sequence of reminiscences moves on to produce another aspect of an Indian Caribbean woman's identity. This vignette portrays the memories of indentureship, its hardships, humiliations, and suffering. The narrator speaks,

I am Indian, plain and simple, not East nor West, just an Indian. I live in the West. My travel across the water to this land has not been easy and many a time I have squatted in the dirt of this or that lepayed hut, a few coins knotted in the corner of my orhni, waiting, waiting-waiting to make the next move (81).

This woman has to make the choice for the "next move" to destroy her husband's life, or else he will destroy her. Here again there is an urgency to claim the right to survive, that I associate with the use of independence. As a wife of an alcoholic and abusive husband, she has the strength to examine the experiences that restrict her in a sickened condition.
As a result, she feels she can no longer continue to let herself be victimized and subordinated. In other words, she is conscious that imperialism has produced both herself and her husband as victims, but his current identity shows he has succumbed to domination. She seems to have not felt similarly victimized, but empowered to transform her condition even though she may experience the loss of her life. She says,

Who is the enemy? Is it rum? The boy I married turns into a strange man who hits and curses at night. I bear much and one night I squat on the dirt waiting ... (82).

Since she cannot negotiate a resolution in this situation, her musings seem to say, she has to challenge it to find a space outside domination that can provide her a sense of self. Thus she draws on a strength to act for her survival:

The cutlass by the fire, I chop some wood up this evening to cook the food. He on the bed and quick quick I chop him two, three times, me ain't know how hard. He give a lil sound and then he stop quiet (82).

The final interpretation which can be drawn from Espinet's complex short story is that responding with independence can produce less gains and more struggles. The vignette is of an Indian Caribbean woman who chooses to liberate herself from dominance and deprivation by running her own business like Cooper's (1992) mother. The patriarchal system that constructs men as breadwinners has failed the Indian man: he is frequently out of work. But this same system did not valorize Caribbean women's worth particularly in regard to their labour. Hence this woman's resistance in order to survive challenges the stereotype of inferiority in a Caribbean woman's identity, that includes dependency and passivity in women. When the opportunity comes to act creatively for the survival of both herself and her family, she accepts it. She tells us,

One morning I got up. Dass had gone for the day already. He had forgotten a full pack of Anchor cigarettes on the table. And right where the window
faced the road, I put an empty Klim tin, and two empty condensed milk tins turned upside down on either side of the Klim tin. It wasn't long before a man came and bought a packet of cigarettes. He was my first customer (84).

It is the beginning of her route to economic independence. As well the story makes us conscious of the interconnectedness of Caribbean women's histories and the interrelatedness of their social conditions. This Indian Caribbean woman's first customer is a "Negro gentlemen". She says,

A Creole woman down the road showed me how to make sugar-cakes and tamarind balls (84).

This imaginative piece shows how boundaries of postslavery and postindentureship overlap as Caribbean women forge an identity in resistance. Moreover, this "interdependence between women is a way to freedom" as Audre Lorde (1984) suggests. It enables each woman to be, and "not used" (111). Rather, they act in participatory and creative ways as Espinet's two Caribbean women do in the story. I now want to discuss a more intensive tracing of independence in this review of a story that brings the protagonist from the Caribbean to North America.

The story *Me dying trial* by Patricia Powell (1993) traces how experiences constructed Gwennie's subjectivity as a woman acting independently, from her home in Jamaica to her migrant position in the United States of America. Gwennie makes that journey possible through the use of independence that always involves the support of her community: extended family and friends. On one occasion when she is visiting her grandmother, fleeing from her husband's abuse and in search of intimacy, she forms a liaison with a tenant that she supposes results in her pregnancy.
When her husband, Walter, continues his aggressive behaviour to keep her subordinated, though filled both with pleasure and remorse about her own sexual behaviour, Gwennie plans a strategy to leave him. Once again, she shows faith in community. She carefully strategizes to free herself from subordination by improving her education, and turns to her family for assistance. Following a confession in writing to a childless aunt, and the willingness of her grandmother who acknowledges her mistake, all her children are distributed between these two homes. Having accomplished that, Gwennie writes Walter a letter telling him of her plans to leave him because "she going back to school to get a little piece of paper, and she don't want to burden him with all the children" (21). The period of time in Teacher's College proves to be "the most fruitful time in her life", Powell (1993) writes (23). Her networking strategy is helpful, because Gwennie is a woman who "love to chat and argue and people take to her quick" (24) so she creates a discussion group in College, that met and had long sessions in her room regularly. In time she thinks less and less about her former experiences of abuse, but she makes infrequent visits to her children whenever she can.

The ambivalence that is an integral part of the route of an independent woman causes her to reconcile with her husband, yet married life never improves, the reiteration of those bad experiences causes her life to remain unfulfilled. Gwennie advances to a position of full time teacher and even bears another child. Walter remains suspicious of her and demands that she adopt a typical female role of housewife. The peaks in her identity are reassuring, for instance, she "starts up teachers' union at the school", becomes active at meetings, and is determined to continue a valuable male friendship with Percy, that had begun in College, and with whom she communicates satisfactorily (58). As the home
situation becomes increasingly unbearable, Gwennie once again depends on community/family by asking her brother to sponsor her to "go up to Foreign" and he agrees. Once more her plan is to leave Walter, and farm out her children among family until she can have them migrate. When Percy shows his concern for conditions 'up in foreign' for her, she has already reconciled with her inner self that her status will change. He reminds her,

You know is only cleaning work them going to give you, or maybe them let you look after people's pickney or maybe wash dishes. That's all them going give you. Nothing else (59).

The typical immigrant woman identity begins to get constructed in Gwennie's subjectivity before she leaves the Caribbean, and Powell (1993) never lets her resume a teaching position in North America, even though she attains material success.16

Finally, Gwennie becomes that Caribbean immigrant woman, whose life experiences are hardly ever addressed in scholarly work. However, in the story told by Powell (1993) we know that this woman considers her identity to be racialized and pathologized. At the same time, she ignores being a victim as she conquers many everyday challenges. For example, she owns a house and car; and she can bring her children to her.

All her children finally arrive. In spite of the difficulties inherent in the bonding of teenagers with parents in a new country, Gwennie remains in control of herself. When her second son begins to assimilate North American culture, she threatens to put him out. When her 'outside' daughter withdraws communication from her, she privately declares her understanding of it. In the area of her sexuality, she postpones intimacy with a man whose friendship is again valuable. She places an application for immigration for her husband, as a reminder of her responsibility to sponsor him that in the story she never
completes. Gwennie's greatest desire appears to be in maintaining an affectionate understanding with her immediate community: children and family. She at times remonstrates with herself as a means of healing for her act of abandoning her daughter, whom she alleges is not her husband's. She tries to work at a reconciliation with Peppy, this daughter, a very sensitive young woman. She ultimately gets the opportunity to reconcile with her at the high school graduation exercises, by marking her congratulations with an envelope that appears to be filled with money. It is at this point in the story Powell (1993) lets us see how Gwennie's yearning for education is reflected in the pride with which she receives news of her daughter's opportunity for university education:

The University you going ... I use to do day's work for a man that teach there. Stevens. Nelson Stevens. I think him teach English literature, so many books about Dickens and Thackeray and Bronté were in the house, it have to be...the students at university used to call the house all the time...them would sit down in the study and chat with him about politics and geography and social studies. Them the courses you must take plenty of... (192).

A Caribbean woman's identity is not described in Caribbean women's writings in terms of victimhood. To the contrary, female characters when victimized, struggle out of extreme subordination to transcend the ordinary idea of woman. These characters act to find the self, and to redefine it by shifting traditional identities to sometimes radical positions in order self-actualize. I see self-reliance, self-assertiveness and independence dominating their responses when I map the fiction and poetry authored by Caribbean women writers. I am reminded of the way that Patricia Hill Collins (1990) has theorised these features as empowering self-definition. Caribbean women writers have given power to their female characters to make their lives realistic. Many Caribbean women like myself can relate to this. The stories indicate the strengths of these women to liberate themselves
from emotional and economic hopelessness. They tell how these women seek to express their ambitions and aspirations their way in order to survive. I consider myself one of these women since my own story relates to survival and is similar to the stories told.

In conclusion, the purpose of this review of the imaginative Caribbean women's literature is not to provide a notion that supports ideas of individualism. I wish to foreground the idea that female characters were made to behave as though they did not feel themselves to be victims, even though from time to time they may have been victimized. This is an important distinction I am urged to make throughout this thesis. That is, Caribbean women as a migrant group endure considerable racism and sexism and economic exploitation yet many of us do not see ourselves in a permanent state of suffering from these adversities. In the imaginative literature, relieving themselves of the sense of victimhood, however, did not make them become 'autonomous individuals'. Though they appeared to act single-mindedly, they remained in every case dependent on community. I interpreted these stories as showing that the activities of female characters though motivated by independence, were not divorced from other contexts like male/female relationships, or community culture upon which their very subjectivities are constructed and nurtured. The stories mainly show that Caribbean female characters are made to act within dominating systems to transform identities in order to survive. Similarly later on in this thesis I demonstrate with the stories of Caribbean women in my sample how these women actually materialize this ethic of independence, to self-define and self-actualize within a commitment to community. For instance, in Chapters VII and VIII, I discuss in detail the strategies these women use to bring together the private and the public, as they negotiate within discourses of patriarchy and white supremacy to move from individual
survival to collective empowerment. In my next chapter, I examine the meanings of the theoretical concepts that I will use to frame my arguments when interpreting the stories of the Caribbean women in this study.

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: Outsiders (whites) do not know us.

2. References to women's activism during that period of the birth of full scale Black activism against immigration issues were few. For example, information that Amy Garvey was identified as second wife to Marcus Garvey, who the Prime Minister MacKenzie treated with courtesy is paltry in comparison with the knowledge we have of Mrs Garvey from Caribbean sources (see Reddock 1994). Then a brief account was given of Mrs Lilian Rutherford's formation of an Art Club which gave "young Negro women a sense of purpose"; and similarly one of "The Women's Club founded in 1902", which was "the oldest Negro organization in Montreal" the responsibility of which no one was named as responsible (417).

3. In similar manner, Ng (1981) argues that ethnicity is a phenomenon constituted by visible differences which the dominant group observes and marks immigrant women. Also she suggests that visible differences must be seen in terms of the "social organization of the society" and are not to be treated in research as cultural traits which these women "brought with them". see Roxana Ng (1981). Constituting Ethnic Phenomenon: an account from the perspective of an immigrant woman. Canadian Ethnic Studies XIII(1): 97-108.

4. Winnie Ng (1982) mentions the growing solidarity among groups of women of different cultural backgrounds taking place in community organizations in Toronto. Agencies such as Immigrant Women's Centre, and the immigrant Women Job Placement Centre in Toronto develop cross-cultural links; also Women Working with Immigrant Women was responsible for spearheading interest in a building a network between the mainstream movement and immigrant women (255).

5. My own story verifies this account, as in 1960 I brought my contract to a close in eleven months, and took up a position as a Library Assistant in the Faculty of Law Library. I also had two friends who ended their contracts in three and six months respectively. I will argue in this thesis that acts of this nature account for the use of the ethic of 'independence' among Caribbean women as a response to domination, and which helps to deconstruct the victim identity accorded to migrant women in Canada.

7. This idea about the use of education for empowerment is advanced in the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1990) Black feminist thought.

8. The findings indicate that of the many female farmers though some were single there was a prevailing explanation of women's weaknesses which will prevent her from performing certain tasks. When a suggestion is made about improved technology to help women undertake these roles, this quote in Odie-Ali's (1986) text, exemplifies this remark: "Nevah mine all a dat! Woman still need man by she side. God know why he mek man to protect she. God nah stupid you know". Social and Economic Studies 35 (2), p. 257.

9. Rhonda Cobham (1990) wrote that it was a historical fact that Jamaican women of the early twentieth century were "economically and sexually independent" compared to women of Victorian England and was portrayed as such in the literature of the time (Women in Jamaican Literature, 1900-1950. In Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (1990) (Eds.) Out of the Kumbla. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, p. 195).

10. This idea of the ethic will be fully defined in Chapter VII, where it is addressed in terms of my findings.

11. A Caribbean language to describe industrialized countries.

12. Braquette Williams (1997), in her introduction to Women out of Place: the Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality points out that African enslaved women likened marriage to slavery, and rejected missionaries' ideas of encouraging them to take those vows.

13. In conversation with Ramabai Espinet, Ph.D., Caribbean writer and Caribbean literary expert, I learnt of Mahadai Das' transformation from a Hindu upbringing to become a political activist in Guyana. Her experiences of abandonment from her Hindu community because of her politics and her personal life are implicated in her work about romantic love.

14. Sans Souci and Other Stories, Stratford, Canada: Williams-Wallace. (pp. 31-42).

15. This story reflects the research of Erna Brodber (1986) in which her findings were that African Caribbean women in Jamaica emphasized they did not want to live in deference to husbands. They all achieved forms of economic independence.

16. I observe Austin Clarke's trilogy about immigrant life in Canada treats female characters who serve as domestics similarly. They develop certain intuitive strengths, but never seem to go beyond manipulative acts among employers and themselves, or to dream of their futures outside of the service.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Ow arwe does know" ¹

I AM

i/used to be
a lot of things
now/i am
more (Mandiela 1990:265)²

Strong women. I remember how I began constructing who I wanted to be, other than the recognition I got as an "orphan". I did not aspire to be a doctor or a lawyer: in my mind I wanted to be like Aunt Georgie. I was fascinated by her strength, her panache! When I got the chance to observe her, I saw her in many roles, negotiating the identities of a mother, housekeeper, property owner, landlady, baker of special breads, and life long learner.³ Occupying the traditional male role of breadwinner, she flaunted both her economic and emotional independence.⁴ She seemed to be free to do whatever she liked. Most of all, for me, she established a matriarchy of family and community, that bonded adults and children at the time irrespective of our diversity in race and class. I felt very comfortable in her setting to make these family connections, that lessened my insecurities as a child without living biological parents. I remember playing with all my cousins and friends in her yard, and when we were exhausted we looked admiringly at her; then we were served her brand of bake, or rolls and fish, with cocoa in large enamel cups!
I like the image I kept of that woman, and felt strongly that she was who I wanted to be when I grew up. As an adult I have reflected on what it might have been for her to survive the social and economic ups and downs in her life throughout which she displayed unrelenting courage. I have thought, using my extended family as an example, that this model of 'independent' woman seemed fairly common in our society, with women's roles defined differently depending on the social context.

Recollections of strong women inspired me to think of the social context in which the agency of women is fostered. I run the risk of essentializing, if I suggest that agency is evidently very much a part of Caribbean women's identity. I take this risk because I propose to argue that the agency in Caribbean women's practices does not amount to an innate essence. Rather it arises as a historically developed response to the realities of genocide, servitude, slavery, indentureship and colonialism. Migration to Canada is the most recent stage in this historical pattern.

In making the claim (and in exploring its validity in subsequent chapters) that the Caribbean women in the Canadian diaspora of my study demonstrate an 'ethic of independence', I rely on a postmodern understanding of identity, subjectivity, agency and resistance. In this chapter, I explore the theoretical underpinnings of my use of these terms in this study. I am aware of the tightrope I walk between the postmodern notion of multiple selves and the modernist claim that Caribbean women are strong women possessing a historically developed sense of independence. I attempt to explore the tension between these two positions-postmodernism and modernism-without, however, claiming that 'independence' is a feature of all Caribbean women. In this chapter I offer theoretical support for the position that independence is an oppositional consciousness that enabled the
women in this study to survive imperialism, class exploitation, patriarchy, ableism and heterosexism.

**Subjectivity, Experience and Identity:** Kathryn Woodward (1997) reminds us that the terms, subjectivity and identity, are used interchangeably but overall they are different. Subjectivity she notes includes our sense of self. It involves the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions which constitute our sense of 'who we are' and the feelings which are brought to different positions within culture. Subjectivity involves our most personal feelings and thoughts (39).

Although this statement might suggest the individual control of self, yet, Woodward continues,

we experience our subjectivity in a social context where language and culture give meaning to our experience of ourselves and where we adopt an identity (39).

I am more interested in Caribbean women's sense of self and the social context in which their sense of themselves take shape rather than in a socially produced identity. I pay attention, however, to scholars' view of identity as a distinct concept yet in dialectical relations with subjectivity. According to Paul Gilroy (1997),

identity provides a way of understanding the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed (301)

There are similar constructions in the concepts of subjectivity and identity of history, context and agency. We also conceive identity to understand how systems exist to categorize and classify individuals. These categories or classes bear symbols so that we gain some sense of how social relations are organized and how social practices are maintained. The systematic marking produces representation and difference, that in some form of continuum involves essentialist ideas of belonging. But identity itself continues not
to be unproblematic as two things happen. On the one hand, the systems and symbols for defining introduce difference; while on the other hand, identity does not unify as there are always points of contestations and contradictions that have to be negotiated (Woodward 1997; Hall 1997; Gilroy 1997). I am less interested in the macro view of identity, and for that reason I specifically rely on the notion of subjectivity and historical formation.

In this historical formation of subjectivity that is continuously being constituted and reconstituted over periods of time, we produce stories about ourselves. Because stories can be contextualized, according to Mama (1995), subjectivity can "be studied at any point in the life cycle" of an adult, because it does not presuppose the individual is in a fixed or unitary form (129). In my thesis I locate these subjects through their experiences from childhood socialization to their adulthood in community activism. I believe I can come to terms with these stories as a collective experience because resistance is central in the accounts of all their lives. But first it is important to bring to the analysis of my data a postmodern understanding of experience and the notion of discourse.

Joan Scott (1992), in her article Experience, addresses the modernist ways in which historians use the evidence of experience in history. Historians, Scott argues, consider experience to be self-evident truth:

When the evidence offered is the evidence of "experience", the claim for referentiality is buttressed--what could be truer, after all, than a subject's account of what he or she has lived through? (24).

Experience becomes "the most authentic kind of truth" upon which scholars base their analysis. When this occurs, individuals become the starting point of knowledge and "that also naturalises categories such as man, black, white heterosexual or homosexual," categories that become "characteristics of individuals" (27). That is,
they locate resistance outside its discursive construction and reify agency as an inherent attitude of individuals, thus decontextualizing it (25).

This means we do not learn about how the actions of individuals are shaped and constrained by the historical context in which they operate. For example, the very meaning of agency is historically specific. Our recognition of it depends on the language and concepts we use to make meaning of it.

To explore how individuals come to know, think and act, Scott argues that we must turn to an understanding of how individuals are constituted relationally and how they are constituted in discourse. Discourse is the complexity of communication, signs and practices that organize the knowledge of how individuals are socially produced and exist. This social production of individuals is based on certain interests that are responsible for conflicting ways of seeing the world the way it is. Individuals as products within a discourse manifest power or are disempowered, as social relations are structured to both encourage and limit relations and associated practices. Yet discourses are constantly changing and evolving in communication processes (Gordon 1980; Foucault 1979). For the historians, this means attending to

the historical process that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences. It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience (25, 26).

If we reject the notion that experience originates in individuals alone, then, we will need a deep interrogation of historical contexts in that they are constituted. We would need in Spivak's terms, "to make visible the assignment of subject positions" (33). Scott offers an example that is relevant to this thesis when she discusses the emergence of the category Black as discussed by Stuart Hall:
The fact is "black" has never been just there either [writes Stuart Hall]. It has always been an unstable identity, psychologically, culturally and politically. It, too, is a narrative, a story, a history. Something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found. People now speak of the society I come from in totally unrecognizable ways. Of course Jamaica is a black society, they say. In reality it is a society of black and brown people who lived for three or four hundred years without ever being able to speak of themselves as "black". Black as an identity which had to be learned and could only be learned in a certain moment. In Jamaica that moment is the 1970s. (Hall quoted in Scott, p. 33).

There are multiple discourses that compete, as Gilroy (1997) informs us there are also oppositional identities. These, he asserts, occur in today's world where warring ubiquitous conflicts show that identity ceases to be

an on-going process of self-making and social interaction. It becomes instead a thing—an entity or an object to be possessed and displayed (307)

To treat identity as an event in discourse, however, does present the problem that we cannot see agency in individuals and their resistance to oppressive social situations, two ideas that are central to this thesis. Both Scott and Judith Butler (1992) have responded to this problem by pointing out that while subjects are constituted discursively, they inhabit multiple competing systems and choose how to act within them. Subjects do resist from within. As Scott puts it,

subjects are constituted discursively, but there are conflicts among discursive systems, contradictions within any one of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy. And subjects have agency. They are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them (34).

To be a subject is to exist within certain conditions that structure a person's agency. So these conditions enable choices, although they are not unlimited. Subjects are constituted discursively, experience is a linguistic event (it doesn't happen outside established meanings), but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning. Since discourse is shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience is a subject's history. Language is a site of
history's enactment. Historical explanation cannot, therefore, separate the two (34).

Competing discourses shaped the strong and independent woman with whom I grew up, and about whom Caribbean women in my sample talked. The Aunt Georgie's of the Caribbean world did not produce themselves, but they were within an organized system that produced them to come to know themselves as independent women. Such women may be said to constitute a collectivity of resistance.

Butler (1992) notes as well that subjects who are agents are already insiders of the discourse, and already constructed to share the power. She affirms:

that agency belongs to a way of thinking about persons as instrumental actors who confront an external political field. But if we agree that politics and power exist already at the level at which the subject and its agency are articulated and made possible, then agency can be presumed at the cost of refusing to inquire into its construction. (13)

Scott concludes that when we tell our stories they are to be taken as "neither self-evident nor straightforward" since they are politically oriented and can be contested. She writes

The study of experience, therefore, must call into question its originary status in historical explanation. This will happen when historians take as their project not the reproduction and transmission of knowledge said to be arrived at through experience, but the analysis of the production of that knowledge itself (37).

The stories of the Caribbean women in this study cannot be treated, then, as self-evident truths. Rather, they must be deconstructed as stories emerging out of specific historical discourses. It is imperative, therefore, that I contextualize historically the subjects in the study. Placing these subject in contexts require attending to the interconnected histories of genocide, slavery, indenture, colonialism and neo-colonialism. As well, I need to attend to the meaning of identity in the context of the diaspora. I explore, how these subjects take up a variety of positions within the constraints of diasporic conditions. I next need to
understand how to make the connection between experience, agency, subjectivity and identity. Himani Bannerji's (1991) work, *But who speaks for us?* is helpful here.

The story of Himani Bannerji's (1991) experience of her identity in the diaspora enables an understanding of the meaning of identity and suggests how I can explore these migrant women's experiences in my study. Himani Bannerji, a professor of Sociology of Indian/Pakistan origin, examines her own coming to terms with the meaning of identity in Canada. She describes herself as an upper class, well educated woman, and, who migrated to Canada via England, fully conversant in English culture and Marxist doctrine. Bannerji recalls her surprise, when as a student in the Canadian academy, her immigrant status caused her to become "an outsider and not much by the way of intellectual performance was expected of" her (69). Silenced and marginalised in all locations that she co-occupied with whites, she felt her identity was not in common with a "middle class Anglo/European cultural heritage and white skin" (69). The result was that she found herself,

> deprived of a general sense of social belonging, of being a comfortable user of local cultural grammar, divided by my gender, race and marxism, I was an "outsider" in and to my discipline and classrooms that I inhabited (69).

Her identity was essentialized and stereotyped. Professors and peers saw her through the lens of racism. Though she received good grades as a MA student, she was asked trivia by "eminent English professors" about the effects of winter on her wearing of saris (70). How others saw her was opposed to how she saw herself because she was excluded from the theoretical production of knowledge.

She experienced racism persistently in several locations. In particular she found that in the women's movement identity was essentialized and race was not mentioned. Along with other non-white women, she was categorized as "Black" or labelled "immigrant".
She felt pushed out of the movement, and so took refuge in academic pursuits where in a liberal setting she pursued a search for identity. She turned to theoretical work because she needed to understand why her "body" was a "political signifier", for even as a lecturer at university she felt she was meant to be in another kind of work, and she was unequal to her white coworker (72).

When she looked at marxist feminist theory, it did not shed light on her identity, because women's oppressions are integrated and interpreted "alongside the economic factors as 'cultural/personal' aspects of the mode of production" (90). For her, this integration has lost the legitimacy of "feeling/experience" to "scientific" and objective analysis (91). Each theoretical understanding of oppression failed to enable her to appreciate the historical shift in identity she experienced. She most needed to understand how non-white women identities were subsumed or elided by white women's to the point of invisibility.

Bannerji (1992) concludes, much like Scott (1992), there is the need to have a historicized view of how her identity got produced. She argues,

without a materialist and historical view of consciousness, without a theory of a conscious and transformative relation between labour, self and society, the notion of self or subjectivity remains unconnected to social organization or history in any formative and fundamental sense (91).

Scott (1992) and Bannerji (1992) in distinct ways have made visible a notion of the self positioned in discourse. That is, they assert that individuals are not acting on their own, but within discourses to produce social identities and relations. If we work with that notion, we will still need to find a place for agency and collective resistance.

In Inderpal Grewal's (1994) article, *Autobiographic subjects and diasporic locations: Meatless days and Borderlands*, the autobiographies of two women of colour,
the first one is South Asian, the other is Chicana, are discussed. Grewal analyzes these two texts because she wants to connect subjectivity, identity and resistance. In Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*, Grewal has two concerns: the author's claim "there are no women in the Third World"; and the lack of exposure in the text of women's collective practices of resistance. In the first case, Suleri's claim was intended to reject Western ideas of the feminist subject. Suleri informs her students and readers that the way white women understand the category "woman" would not apply to Third World women. However, a critical Grewal writes,

> The danger of rejecting the term "women", besides that of eliding the effects of modernity, is that of foreclosing feminist struggles that are increasingly transnational in this interconnected world of diasporic populations and multinational corporations (243).

In other words, we cannot discard the meaning, 'women', that has already been universalized to constitute gender, when feminists are in a struggle across national boundaries to transform hegemonic concepts of this term. Grewal commends Suleri's notion that for Third World women, there is no unified self; there are only multiple selves producing multiple identities, but she notes that this text does not direct us to a location to place agency and collective resistance. In contrast Gloria Andalzúa's *Borderlands* enables resistance, and Suleri's *Meatless Days* does not. Grewal's opinion is that women in Suleri's text have constructed subjectivities as Bannerji's suggested earlier, as she writes,

> Suleri's subjectivity (as well as that of her family members) is therefore constructed within the complex nexus of gender/race relations between colonized/man and colonizing/woman. In addition, Suleri also describes her position in another location: academia in the United States, where the nexus of her location and her political positioning is quite different (238).

This is a complex type of subjectivity for writing an autobiography, the genre of which is usually the "unified subject". But the "unified subject" represents women in one location,
with "historicized and specific subject positions", and precludes the analysis of the collective subject (240). This means that even if Suleri's women have different subject positions, they remain constructed in discourses in a specific way. They do not share this multiple subjectivity with women in other locations in Pakistan, who may have different roles as women to counter domination/subordination. Hence she writes,

Although Suleri's work is a powerful critique of the Western unified subject and suggest that postmodern subjectivity is the only viable Self possible within a diasporic world it does not enable any practices of resistance (236).

This position, she asserts, can be very disquieting to feminist readers, particularly those like myself who seek notions of empowerment for women. Grewal interprets the stories of Suleri's women as showing only individual resistance. She sees no collective resistance in these stories but only individuals acting in resistance: the author's friend who creates "a self that is theater" (245); her mother who is "represented as being active, actively changing herself according to the multiplicity of the desires by not losing her difference"; and even the author's refusal of an arranged marriage (240, 246). Grewal's argument is that while these acts do signify agency, they do not amount to collective resistance. In my view even the individual acts can amount to collective resistance. For instance, I name as collective resistance the practices of the Aunt Georgies' in the Caribbean that enable them to survive independently despite failed devastating personal circumstance. The private acts of resistance within the patriarchy often enable women to self-actualize and show preparedness for opportunities for further resistance, as Chapter VI will discuss. For me, Grewal's critique ignores the ways resistance is staged appropriate to particular conditions.

I would argue, that the concept of resistance covers a broad range of ideas. It may be conceived to include a more masculine definition of collective confrontation and power
to overthrow ideologies for example the armed resistance in slavery (Aptheker 1989). Another component of the meaning of resistance, addressed in Richard Burton's (1997) work embraces the types of contestation that are conducted within a "given system" using "weapons and concepts" derived and used by that same system (6). Burton examined cultural performances that took place at the estate houses in the plantation society. He considered the songs and dances that the enslaved Africans carried out as "psychological" and "cultural" resistance (50). In this point of the range of meaning given to resistance, Burton reminds us that Foucault (1978) writes about power and resistance being together at the same location, and yet resistance is not in an exterior position to power. I then argue that Suleri's women though remaining inside the system have power to conduct forms of resistance, and we only find this as collective resistance when we do research about women's activities over time. Again as Burton reasons, we can use this internal form of resistance and consider it to be opposition. Thus he follows a notion, according to Foucault (1978), in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, that there are points of resistance everywhere in the power network, because there is

no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial, by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations (Foucault quoted in Burton (1997):6-7).

I argue that the Caribbean Aunt Georgies and Suleri's women, move beyond patriarchal images of themselves in necessary and solitary forms of resistance. Women's resistance activities appear collective when we explore their stories. 6
I return to Grewal's (1994), comparison of how both authors in her article discuss resistance. Andalzúa's Borderlands, in Grewal's view moves beyond individual resistance. It is

a text that is unequivocal about its commitment to feminisms and postmodern identities and its assault on modernist ones... This is a narrative of self that refuses closure. It remains open, complex and contradictory. It mixes genres, languages, and nationalities. It fractures the idea of a margin as a border, between the dominant and the dominated (247).

In other words, Grewal sees Anzaldúa as discussing Chicano women resisting on all fronts, while they remain marginal to dominant identities of race, gender and heterosexism. Grewal finds resistance here, as the text speaks to Chicano women with their multiple subjectivities struggling against the dualism of colonizer/colonized to resist Western hegemony. Therefore, Andalzúa's text forges a "consciousness of cultural multiplicity" and a shattering of marginality, that is,

the feminist subject is in process, though not necessarily with the fixity of one feminist agenda in view (248)

These are clearly struggles against dominance, whereas in Suleri's text women are kept in subordinating positions, with no signs of transformation. They demonstrate no evidence of confronting patriarchal dominance.

Yvonne Kesho Scott (1991), an African American scholar, may agree with Grewal that Suleri’s text does not project collective resistance because she reflects on her findings in a similar way. Kesho Scott finds that the agency in her subjects' resistance does not move beyond an oppositional position within the discourse of the subordination of women. She reflects on her findings and named her observations of the actions of women in her study "habits of surviving". In her text by the same name, she challenges the way standard practices to survive are used by Black women. These practices never go beyond sustaining
logical and successful learned strategies to deal with prevailing interlocking systems of oppressions in American history. These "habits of survival" she refers to as

the external adjustments and internal adaptations that people make to economic exploitation and to racial and gender related oppression (7).

She argues that these habits are mainly "responses to pain and suffering" that repeatedly get used to relieve anger, gain a "sense of self-control"; and to extend pleasure (7). The concept that strategies of survival are habit-forming seems to parallel the modernist thinking of the individual as an autonomous subject who can determine right ways of performing to survive. These acts define and make permanent Black women's ways of surviving. Yet Kesho Scott (1991) sees a dilemma. From her analysis of five African American women's stories including her own, she points out that using strategies "continually and uncritically" to survive can become dangerous as women change from "being governed by a larger force to being governing forces themselves" (8). Kesho Scott contends none of the women's stories goes beyond 'habits of survival' to liberation where women may have choices beyond survival. As hooks (1990) argues, we must move beyond resistance and survival towards new, alternative and creative ways of being. In Kesho Scott's study, these African American women only employ agency to achieve goals so that they may acquire the essentials for material satisfaction: shelter; marriage; and education that in turn produce other forms of oppressions. The reasons for their materializing their desires in bourgeois positions is one way in which agency works, but that is not the only way as agency is also reflected in the desires of Caribbean women in my sample to contribute to social change. Kesho Scott finds agency displayed only in achievements that bring social and employment opportunities; offers some degree of personal freedom; and helps to alleviate oppressions generally. It is this revelation from her data analysis that
poses a dilemma for her: that is, of African American women acting to survive, yet not subverting the system that they are resisting.

This is the type of women's experience that both Kesho Scott (1991) and Grewal (1994) argue amounts to individual but not collective resistance. Grewal illustrates her argument with Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. First, the narrative in Anzaldúa suggests identity is not fixed but fluid. Grewal writes:

> Andalzúa's identity is as mixed as her narrative form, for she is mestiza, a woman, a lesbian, a Mexican, an indigenous inhabitant within a Catholic, North American culture. Living in the "borderlands", that is, where the term border has little meaning, she finds her life a "path that continually slips in and out of the white, the Catholic and the Mexican" (248).

Next, Grewal sees these positions are constituted in resistance using a new consciousness that enables women to live in two worlds and forcing the shattering of marginality. That is,

> Anzaldúa struggles against the hegemonic "West" as a site of enunciation more than Suleri, who speaks its language more smoothly because of a different colonial legacy and education, and a different contemporary diasporic location. For Andalzúa, the politics of language becomes the politics of inhabiting different locations without suggesting which is her "true" language. To do so would be to suggest a centre, that fixity of an essential identity that her work so clearly repudiates (246).

I want to locate Caribbean women in these dialectic locations of resistance—Suleri's and Andalzúa's text—because I realise they too struggle in several discourses of patriarchy and imperialism. Yet, they are produced mainly as housewives, as workers, but they constitute themselves as activists and as educators. They do not remain static and passive, but locate themselves in multiple and shifting positions. As migrants, they move from one subject position to another, from membership in either a dominant racial group or one of distinct ethnicity (marking the complexity of the Caribbean) to a racialized minority in the
First World. Regardless of the many historically produced positions they inhabit, the Caribbean women in this study are all located within colonial histories. I argue that they come to know themselves as resisting. To explore this theme I find it useful to turn to Black feminists who discuss ideas of radical Black subjectivity.

**Radical black subjectivity:** For hooks (1990),

> Opposition is not enough. In that vacant space after one has resisted there is still the necessity to become-to make oneself anew (15).

For marginalized women to take up social positions that resist racism and sexism, subjectivity has to be radical, beyond merely a counterstance. The task, hooks (1990) writes is to see that part of our struggle for radical Black subjectivity is the quest to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory (29).

Thus she offers a prescription for radical Black subjectivity that is based on her redefining herself and her location among individuals who have done likewise. There are several important points to this prescription of which I select the most useful to my study. To make the transformation to a radical position, there needs to be a concern for the planet, and for all forms of domination. As a result a commitment to solidarity is needed so as to explore varying forms of oppositional politics in order to critique capitalism. For that reason individuals while acknowledging their privileged positions in a professional class, they integrate their views with others of different classes, as well as, ensure to maintain links with their origins. hooks recognises that identity politics is paramount in the liberation process, yet she views the activism of her group as avant garde only to the extent that we [they] eschew essentialist notions of identity, and fashion selves that emerge from the meeting of diverse epistemologies, habits of being, concrete class locations, and radical political commitments (19).
This concept of radical black subjectivity begins with self-definition to address issues of critical consciousness, self-actualization and empowerment, an argument also agreed by Patricia Hill Collins' (1990). While hooks illustrates radical black subjectivity as an engagement in revolutionary politics to produce a revolutionary Black woman, Collins who does not name the concept as such, supports the idea by telling us to look at the practice of empowerment.

Empowerment involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization. African-American women and other individuals in subordinate groups become empowered when we understand and use those dimensions of our individual, group and disciplinary ways of knowing that foster our humanity as fully human subjects (230).

This means that redefining the self as self-reliant and independent is making a link with strategies of survival. It is this connection that I make with Caribbean women's use of independence and community activism.

Interestingly enough both hooks and Collins depend on African American women's literature, much as I did in Chapter I with Caribbean women's, to illustrate the idea of empowerment through self-definitions. hooks (1992), views feminist literature, in the genre of narratives about women's strategies of resistance as a source of empowerment and a legacy of radicalism, and advocates an increased and ongoing production of these works. She writes,

We need to hear more from courageous black women who have gone against the grain to assert nonconformist politics and habits of being, folks like Toni Cade Bambara, Gloria Joseph, Faye Harrison, June Jordan, and so many others (59).

Collins (1990) also confirms that Black women's literature "contains many examples of how Black women are empowered by a changed consciousness" and refers to African
American women's literature as a significant source of illustrating self-definition for Black women. Some pieces, in poetry and prose, she asserts help the process of self-defining, as they exhort women to experience change in order to become empowered. In particular, autobiographical writings are instructive in sharing values of self-reliance and resourcefulness. Naming the works of Black women in the 1940s, she writes,

Black women's literature contains many examples of how Black women are empowered by a change consciousness (111).

From the works of hooks (1990, 1992) and Collins (1990), I propose a methodology that emphasizes the tales of Caribbean women as self-definitions and summaries of their histories of resistance. Each author pointed out that survival means resistance when it is connected to African American women's activism. As well, they confirm the significance of examining Black women's activism in certain ways. In hooks (1992) for example, she raises the question of addressing issues of differences among Black women, and among these women, she calls for an understanding of those whose subjectivities were constructed by resistance and not passive acceptance and to treat women's activism as forms of radicalism against white supremacy. hooks and Collins helped me to figure out how to study radical subjectivities. For example, hooks (1992) asserts that for Black women to become radical they have to educate themselves for "critical consciousness" and start community organizations so as to build a foundation for the future charting of their journeys (57). Collins (1990) notes that a journey to self-definition can be accomplished because there is a historical narrative of women's strengths, and the "self" can be explored in the literature of marginalized (African American) women. They both theorised about subjective experiences as creating values that affirmed my intention to explore independence as an ethic in Caribbean women's responses to
patriarchy and imperialism. I agree with this position as I as well fully recognize through history and through the literature that

identity is not the goal but rather the point of departure in the process of self-definition (106).

My theoretical framework needs to embrace the idea that self-discovery for Black, as well as, Caribbean women is a strategizing process of deconstruction of the underlying causes that shape their identities.

Thus far, in this analysis, I reject modernist notions of identity because they relate to fixed autonomous subjects as we find in the social construction of the 'immigrant woman', that sent me in the first place to look for Caribbean women in Caribbean literature of the region and diaspora. I agree with Scott that experience is not innate, and not reflective of a 'pre-given reality'. My investigation of the histories that produced the stories I hear from my samples, is therefore imperative. I embrace the notion of subjectivity, because we know we are dealing with subject formations that emerge from discursive systems. We cannot avoid looking at social, political and historical contexts that produce subjectivity, because in this notion the woman is not an invention of the system, instead, the system has constituted the woman. It is, as Mama (1995) argues, "both individual and socio-historical at the same time" (62). I can combine the idea of Caribbean woman as an agent, acting and responding to several discourses, and use their stories as a social history that produces subjectivity as a flexible and fluid concept. These contexts of self and discourses are where I am convinced that agency is an integral part of resistance. I now want to examine how some scholars define agency as a concept and connect it to ideas of subjectivity and resistance. I found an example of this in the work of Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo (1996).
Abiding Courage, Lemke-Santangelo’s (1996) work, contextualizes agency in the stories of African-American female migrants within the United States in concrete terms. Her work gives emphasis to these women’s activism in transition from the Southern United States to East Bay cities in California. She examines how these women, who led subjugated and victimized lives in the South, mostly as domestic workers, challenged the bitter racism on a new terrain, that is, residing in neighbourhoods other than Southern in the United States, by moving to industrial job positions and building communities in the Western United States. In spite of the lack of state commitment to develop residential areas, to provide jobs, housing and other services, a number of these women fought bitterly to survive and sustain their communities. Lemke-Santangelo (1996) asserts that their behaviour was due to the cultural legacy that they received from their ‘forebears’ who systematically fought for survival and their freedom from the harsh brutal conditions of slavery. The picture she presents of these women’s lives is one in which the concept of agency is embedded as a theme in strategies of survival. Lemke-Santangelo’s study measures success by the women’s tremendous efforts to display organizing and leadership skills to engage in resistance activities. That is, they struggled to sustain the everyday desires that they had for themselves and their communities to acquire a reasonable lifestyle, implicit in attaining jobs; bonding in networks; and creating comfort in residential surroundings. Hence, the women’s agency employed in these new terrains of racial discrimination, seemed to "suggest that activism was an organic, continuous aspect of their lives" (7).

The study’s link between the contemporary and the history of experience of domination/subordination that produced agency, is similar to my study in which I map
Caribbean women's resistance in historical imperialism as well as in contemporary times. Additionally, the study clarifies for me the connection between agency and resistance in that it showed that the African American women's activism was consistently produced through systems of discrimination. In other words, we can count these women's activism as successes by the multiple gaps that they closed at sites where discursive practices sought to position them in exclusion and humiliation. Hence, Lemke-Santangelo's concludes,

Black resistance is a variable concept, filtered through the limitations and opportunities of any given moment, as well as through class, gender and age; and most black southerners found that putting food on the table, educating children, caring for the old and sick, maintaining a spiritual life was protest enough. When the map of white supremacy is viewed in its entirety, simple acts of living clearly amounted to acts of resistance for the majority of African Americans belonging to this generation (19).

This declaration which indicates that agency is intricately interwoven in everyday life for survival, confirms there is a theoretical connection between agency and resistance.

To conclude, I summarise how I will use certain concepts in my methodology and their meanings in this chapter. I use subjectivity because its meaning embodies ideas of creativity, fluidity and flexibility and the suggestion that I could analyze how my participants saw the world to negotiate their ways through discursive systems. When I look at how a Caribbean woman survives in Canada, I use agency as it connotes the subject in process of acting and performing in conflicting systems. These systems produce a certain form of experience that I find in the stories of the subjects about social transactions in their lives that would involve agency. I use resistance to describe their oppositional responses to domination/subordination, and I elaborate on this with the term independence as it denotes a specific set of ways in which subjectivity is expressed by some Caribbean
women. I now move on to Chapter III to explore the historical narratives of race and gender in which resistance is embedded.

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: *How we know what we know*


3. Aunt Georgie was my mother's youngest aunt, she took on the role of grandmother to her siblings' children. She lived the longest of her generation, in the location which was once a colonial estate. In spite of a day of hard work, and the stress of family life, Aunt Georgie devoted an hour or more each day to reading the newspapers thoroughly, and any other documentary literature she could put her hands on, e.g. Readers' Digest or the National Geographic.

4. It was a secret story in our family that while her husband, my Uncle George, lived in the home, she had no communication with him for 'fifteen' years (which seemed like a lot then at my age) about which he grieved. But her disappointment in his ability to provide financially was very deep, I imagined.


6. I bring to mind the current trend among Caribbean women of the second generation migrants, to explore their own sources of radicalism and their activities to disrupt institutional practices in racism and sexism, as part of their everyday lives. A paper which gives testimony to my thought was read at the 23rd Caribbean Studies Conference in Antigua, 1998 by Renee Blake, entitled 'Wha yah name, school and street? transplanting class identity to a racial society.

7. According to Marcia Wharton-Zaretsky (1998) in her article, Women's Resistance and Activism, Black women are constructed as radical subjects because of the "counter-discourses" which position them as 'Black' and as 'woman'. (*Canadian Women Studies Journal* 18: (1), pp. 140-143).
8. This text traces the transition of African American women in the South where they held domestic and field work jobs, to East Bay, California where they engaged in labour in an industrial, wartime economy. The work focuses on how social change takes place in spite of the triple jeopardy of labour, discrimination and household responsibilities Black women experienced. They were able to establish and sustain networks and institutions within their community.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

*Back in time an a whole lot o' we:*¹ 
*Caribbean Women as Rebels and Spitfires*²

If I have to define myself as coming from a particular part of the world I like to think of myself as a Caribbean person; because the Caribbean embraces so much, it's like saying you're a poet. For psychically, you're at once connected to Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas (Grace Nichols, Caribbean woman writer, 1989).³

**Introduction**

Grace Nichols' words reflect the spirit of the claim of diversity made by many of the Caribbean women in my study. How was the knowledge of this diversity produced? The Caribbean is an imagined community,⁴ made up of widely diverse peoples. The geographical region encompasses an archipelago of islands and two mainland areas, on the continents of Central and South America. I argue in this Chapter that in order to interpret the experiences of these Caribbean women in the diaspora, I must interrogate the historical process in this geographic region that produced their experiences and positioned them as subjects (Scott 1992; Bannerji 1991). I assert that the interconnectedness of their histories that emerges from tracing a 400-year process, justifies the diversity of my sample. I begin the process with the fifteenth century genocide of Aboriginal peoples in the Anglophone Caribbean and explore the facts that provide the grounds for positing an identity of the Caribbean within the imagined community in the region. These are: the early arrival of destitute Europeans in servitude; the enslavement of large majorities of Africans over three
hundred years; and the indentureship system of a lesser majority of Asians, and to some extent Portuguese. In adding to that picture, I account for the presence of the White elite responsible for governing these systems. I also cite other groups including Jews, who were involved in commercial enterprises as well as slaveholding.

Having drawn up an account that these groups create an imperialist hierarchy of the oppressor and the oppressed, I examine the patterns of resistance activities that occurred in retaliation to the brutality of imperialism in the Anglophone Caribbean. In particular, I look at women’s resistance activities from the earliest times up to mid twentieth century. I believe this resistance pattern underpins the stories of the women in my current sample. In concluding this linear historical journey that outlines the contexts to comprise a Caribbean identity, I explore how overlapping boundaries of these groups have caused scholars to consider the idea of creolization. Creolization offers a cultural marker that may identify the extent to which one may claim a Caribbean identity in the region. To understand the positioning of women in Caribbean migrant groups, I must pay attention to scholarly perceptions of Caribbean identity that from time to time may influence the constituting and reconstituting of these women’s subjectivities.

Histories of Genocide, Servitude, Slavery, Indentureship: the stratification system In 1492 Columbus argued for enslaving Aboriginal Caribbean peoples whom he named 'Indians. 5 Williams (1970) writes,

As the years went by, Columbus more and more adopted the view that the real riches of the West Indies lay in their Indian population. He saw in the cannibalism of the Caribs a pretext for enslavement. He described them as 'a wild people fit for any work, well proportioned, and very intelligent, and who, when they have got rid of their cruel habits to which they have been accustomed, will be better than any other kind of slaves (31). 6
Despite Columbus' intentions, the Spanish and the French found the supply of Aboriginal labour to be "inadequate and unsuitable", and in 1542, the 'New Laws' were passed prohibiting their slavery (Badillo 1995:65). According to Williams (1970) when the English came to the West Indies "very little effort was made to enslave the indigenous population" (95). Craton (1986) claims that European presence meant the appropriation of land and the enslavement of indigenous peoples of the region, under the guise of 'negotiating' ownership with the male Caribs, while sexually exploiting their females. In any case, miscegenation in this early period marked the beginning of the coloured population, as it differentiated a new group of people who had "mixed loyalties", and whom the colonizers were supposed to have treated differently (Craton 1986:97). Ultimately, however, genocide of the indigenous populations meant that new sources of labour had to be found. The English and French turned to their metropolitan cities for white "not free but involuntary labour" (Williams 1970:96).

Hilary Beckles (1989b), in White servitude and Black slavery in Barbados, gives "the first in depth treatment of the subject" of the oppressions of some Europeans in the Caribbean (xiv). Beckles' work (1989) makes clear that White people also belonged to oppressed groups engaged in labour development of the region, and were not only symbols of "wealth, power, and status" (175). Servitude began in 1627 with shipments of White skilled and unskilled women and men, of English, Irish, Scots or Welsh backgrounds, marginalized and poor, and who "agreed to emigrate at the expense of another". Kidnapped from the streets, or taken out of prisons, they could obtain freedom and three to five acres of land after serving a three to five year term (Williams 1970:96). This was a "systematic application of legally sanctioned force and violence" on indentured workers,
who the planters racialized, stereotyped and auctioned without respect for law (Beckles 1989b:5). Between 1654 and 1660, the group represented 2,331 workers brought to Barbados; and between 1654 and 1685 a total of 10,000 who left Bristol for the Caribbean.

In the late seventeenth century, there was increased acquisition of people from West Africa to whom no promises of tenure or land were made. This activity began the full scale slave trade that lasted for three centuries and transformed the social and demographic picture of the Caribbean region (Hall 1989; Morrisey 1989; Craton 1986; Cox 1984; Higman 1984; Williams 1970; and Goveia 1965). Africans from various sources of the African continent regularly added to a growing population of creole Africans and coloureds, along with lesser numbers of elite and poor Whites (Higman 1984).

It is important to note that Africans did not comprise a homogeneous group, as Barry Higman's (19û4) study informs us. Higman describes the range of complexity that makes up an "internal diversity" of structures of slave societies existing in several parts of the region (4). The heterogeneity, exemplified in some of Higman's tables of birthplace, gives evidence of the multiple cultures to which Africans belonged.9

In the nineteenth century, 'coloured people', the product of miscegenation, comprised a nonwhite group that was identifiable in specific terms as Higman (1984) tells, Thus far, "slaves of color" have been treated as a homogeneous group. But slave societies of the British Caribbean made much finer distinctions, placing each individual along a gradation between white and black (154).

The role of miscegenation was clear in influencing the structure of a Caribbean identity because "color was a significant factor in occupational allocation". The enslaved people who were "coloured were sheltered from the rigors of plantation life" (Higman 1984:194), and so were largely unemployed. Planters established a hierarchy between African creoles
and Africans. They ignored the latter's technological skills. According to Beckles (1988), when White planters were threatened by the resistance of skilled Black labourers they came to the realization that skills of "certain Africans had to be mobilized in order to improve productivity of the plantations" (22).¹⁰

Owing the abolition of slavery in 1833, and the poor industrial relations with freed people, the planters had to commit to continue a sugar economy by introducing the indentureship system. Disregarding the grave conditions in the sugar market, they turned mainly to Asia (Look Lai 1993; Williams 1970) and to a lesser extent, to Africa and Madeira (Ferreira 1994; Moore 1993; Schuler 1980) to establish the system. One of the most prominent planters in Trinidad proposed to improve the colonies, by large scale immigration of free workers from India. The latter were considered as,

a new race of men 'healthy and free, with habits and science ready formed, and sufficiently numerous to stand unsupported and distinct from our present population on its immediate arrival' (Williams 1970:347).

This nineteenth century 'encomienda'¹¹ marked another structuring of a race/colour/class stratified society.

Referring to Walton Look Lai's (1993) Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar, 1838 to 1918, that studies indentureship in sugar-producing colonies,¹² I note that unlike slavery this system offered incentives to immigrants, such as return passages after the end of contracts. There were, however, several failures of contracts that caused Asians to make the Caribbean their 'home'. In 1853 the legally organized importation of labour from China began "the period of multiracial immigration" that brought to the Caribbean, peoples "drawn from diverse nationality sources" who arrived in various phases between 1853 and 1884 (88).¹³ A summary of statistics from one of Look Lai's tables shows Chinese
immigration during that period to be as follows: 13,539 landed in Guyana; 2,837 in Trinidad; 1,152 in Jamaica; 474 in British Honduras; and 23 were born at sea (Table 23:292). The disproportionate ratio in favour of men is indicated in the following statistics for the period 1860-1884: 2,027 females in Guyana; 309 in Trinidad; 122 in Jamaica and 16 in British Honduras (Table 24:294).

Christine Ho (1989) in a brief history of the Chinese in the Caribbean, gives a concise picture of how diversity and integration worked in Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad. Between 1838 and 1917 Chinese who went to Guyana belonged to two rival groups, the Hakka and the Cantonese. In this colony the two groups lived side by side without blending culturally or linguistically (7). In Jamaica, the first Chinese arrived in 1854. Here there was a much larger number of Hakka over Cantonese. They avoided segmentation and "cultural homogeneity enabled them to cooperate" (14). The Chinese in Trinidad, in the 1850s and 1860s (some of whom had migrated from Guyana) were Hakka, and the majority were Cantonese. These groups were segmented among themselves.

According to Look Lai (1993) the immigration of Indians took place in three phases, with the largest number arriving in the last phase, 1871-1917. Between 1838 and 1917, in three periods, there were 238, 909 arrivals in Guyana; 143,939 in Trinidad and 62,060 in Jamaica (108); a small number went to St. Lucia, Grenada, St. Vincent and St. Kitts (107). During the period, 1838-1918, the number of Indian migrants arriving at seven British Caribbean islands was 429,623 (Table 6:276). The number known to have returned to India up to 1916 was 111,303.

Basdeo Mangru's (1996) *A History of East Indian Resistance on the Guyana Sugar Estates*, specifies the differences among East Indians who immigrated to Guyana from the
early 1850s and indicates that Indians, like Africans, did not comprise a homogeneous group. Their origins were geographically and tribally different. Apart from geographic distinction, there was the diversity of religion and caste. Reddock (1994) informs us of the dual composition, in Trinidad and Tobago, in which the largest majority belonged to the "lower castes" and "untouchables", yet there were relatively large numbers of higher (twice-born) castes, e.g. Brahmans and Kshatriyas (mainly Rajputs)... In 1877-78 ... of the 18, 488 emigrants from Calcutta, Brahmans and other high-castes comprised 2,223; agriculturists 4,438, artisans 763; low castes 8,807; Muslims 2,250; and Christians seven (31).

White planters assumed no difference among this diverse group of people. Unlike their approach to the enslaved they were not intent on 'civilizing' Asians by force. They assumed they could fully exploit this labour by ascribing to Asians a common identity that stereotyped them as illiterate, without rigid prejudices of caste or creed, and as "'docile', 'cheerful, willing,' 'tractable and industrious'" (Mangru 1996:43).

Monica Schuler (1984) in her "Alas, Alas, Kongo": a social history of indenture African immigration to Jamaica notes that African indenture migration to Jamaica was comprised of captured ex-slaves, liberated Africans, many of them orphan children from Sierra Leone, and others who were coerced into the journey. There were 39,332 African indenture migrants arriving in the British Caribbean between 1834 and 1867 (Look Lai 1993). Schuler (1984) adds their indentureship tenure was arbitrary from one to ten years in the employment of "the wealthiest, most powerful men in Jamaica" who consisted of whites, coloureds and Jewish professionals and merchants (30). Other migrants, as Ferreira (1994) writes about in the nineteenth century consist of the Madeiran Portuguese who emigrated to Trinidad to escape socioeconomic, political and religious persecution. Look
Lai (1993) states that between 1835 and 1881, 40,971 Portuguese migrants were distributed throughout the British Caribbean (Table 5, p. 276). Between 1835 and 1850, according to Brereton (1993), 17,098 immigrants went to Guyana for planters "to secure a regular supply of cheap labour" in their struggles against the dwindling existence of slave labour. Brereton also states that Portuguese immigrants were in the 1890's marked off as a separate group whose occupations were 'jobber' or market gardener, but who later moved onto "shopkeeping and prosperity" (38). From another view point, that is, Moore (1993), Portuguese migration was mainly "to create a middle class" to buffer the tensions between the black meagre economic standing and white accomplishment, and in the interest of "white racial supremacy" (152). Arguing that the Portuguese capture of the retail trade was at the expense of a struggling "black" merchant class, Moore (1993) also asserts that elite whites racialized them as an ethnic group (156-158). Similarly a small Syrian/Lebanese community was positioned in Trinidad but it was "clearly upwardly mobile by the 1920's and 1930's" (Brereton 1993:39).

Other groups that make up this tapestry of a Caribbean identity became noticeable in the late nineteenth century. Because the phenomenon of racial mixing, other than black-white unions, is less taken up in Caribbean scholarly literature, I could only find few to mention. One such is called Dougla. According to Daniel Segal (1993) Dougla is defined as "the mixed offspring of 'black' and 'East Indian' parents". As a group it is not quantifiable as yet, because of the lack of its inscription in the colonial hierarchy, though it has been acknowledged by it (96-97). Another ethnic identity is a "Spanish" that Aisha Khan (1993) defines as
a category which is multivalent, and simultaneously refers to both one ethnic rubric, and many diverse individual members who qualify as it were through various means." (201)

There is also the Cocoa Panylol group that is more fully defined in Sylvia Moodie-Kublasingh's (1994) study, *The Cocoa Panylols of Trinidad* as a subculture of religious, linguistic and social systems found in a community with peasant class origins dating as far back as 1498-1797. It comprises of people of a "racially mixed Amerindian/Spanish/African descent" (2). Between 1967 and 1986 Moodie-Kublasingh interviewed an existing group of 200 people claiming to be descendants of these peasants. The Cocoa Panylol group made a significant contribution to the cocoa industry in the nineteenth century in Trinidad and Tobago (4-5).

Established communities of Jews were found during the second half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, as evidenced in the work of Zvi Loker (1991).15 This group had a "common language, culture and heritage" and settled in areas held by the British, the French and the Dutch (19-20). For reasons of race, like the Portuguese situation, Loker writes, the colonizers encouraged their settlement over three hundred years because their presence "facilitated the settlement of white power" (24). Yet for reasons of prejudice their legal status differed among the colonies, and the white elite controlled the size of their communities as they did in Europe at the time. The text does not give population sizes in the region, but it described their involvement in the colonial economy as the "usual occupations among Jews...characterised Jewish activity".16 Mainly this sector of the population engaged in internal slave trading and behaving "no differently than Christians", operated commercial ventures in industries like, insurance; import and export; and haberdashery (46-48).
In all the British colonies during the process of colonization, as is in the case of Jamaica, the white population consisted of the large scale planters or estate owners, who distinguished their power by their absenteeism. As Edward Cox (1984) writes,

Whites, in charge of the political, social and economic institutions in each territory, determined the frequency and ease of the movement from slavery to freedom as well as the degree of freedom that free coloreds actually enjoyed (33).

Those of the highest levels were members of government and legislature while other whites held respective positions as small estate owners; lawyers and doctors; retailers, nurses; midwives; missionaries and many others in a variety of skilled professions and occupations essential for a livable society (Brathwaite 1971). Higman (1984) writes there were in the 1830s "approximately 50,000 whites and 100,000 freedmen in the British colonies, but only 32,500 slaveowners (100). The white society has historically been famous for its subjugation of others mainly by race, but also by class (Beckles 1989b), however the victimized resisted white dominance and jurisdiction in a variety of ways, the histories of which I will select to argue on the construction of a Caribbean subjectivity.

The Resistance Process The oppressed groups victimized in these systems of genocide, servitude, slavery and indentureship all resisted their oppressions. Aboriginal men, according to Higman (1986) conducted acts of resistance in two categories--accommodationist or confrontational. Higman defines their acts including

manifestations far short of armed rebellion, including even apparent collaboration where such behaviour was designed to frustrate the absolute domination by the master class.17

For example in apparent collaboration with colonizers they permitted sexual unions with Aboriginal women when they believed advantages would accrue. When these acts proved to their disadvantage, they resorted to any of these strategies: trickery to assassinate the
colonizers, formation of alliances with one colonizer against the other, and increasing solidarity with African maroons. Typical of imperialist organizing, divisiveness was established to polarize the many groups into two identities—Arawaks (good) and Caribs (bad) thus ignoring the existence of other groups, and disregarding the complexities of indigenous thinking. As Craton (1982) points out: "alleged proclivity" to cannibalism could have been a means of acting in resistance to Christianity and colonization (100). As well, Beckles (1992) added that there was continuous war by the Caribs or Kalinago over a century. The Carib's resistance to imperialism peaked when they were strengthened by the solidarity that developed between their declining population and the runaway African slaves (Craton 1986). As Michael Craton (1986) rightly says, these patterns of resistance that Amerindians displayed were to be repeated by many oppressed people in the Caribbean over the centuries (96). In addition, I suggest this shift in identity formations through the alliances of the two distinct cultural groups—Aboriginals and Africans—marks a continuum that I argue is the process of multivalent identities and creolization.

On the question of white resistance from servitude, Beckles' (1989) writes,

Servants in seventeenth-century Barbados were a rebellious lot who intermittently fomented sociopolitical unrest (98).

Riots and strikes erupted on estates when "servants" found their rights undermined (101). White servants also ran away in groups, maronage, and as a result British planters retaliated with a legal pass system for control. Yet this system and other restrictive laws did not stop the struggles against continuous abominable treatment. In 1634, there were conspiracies by whites in servitude that sometimes included Blacks and Irish people whose aims were assassination, and to take control of the island. However, race and the increased volume of enslaved Blacks in the Caribbean in the early 1700s, caused the resistance
objectives of White servants to change, for instance "radical servants became more reformist" Beckles (1989:99)

African slaves made up the largest majority of the historically oppressed and they remained in subjugation for over three centuries. Nevertheless their resistance was extremely vigorous and formed a pattern of manumission, maronage, and rebellions in the Anglophone Caribbean (Craton 1982; Higman 1984). During 1600 to 1775, Africans also practised maronage that was extremely significant in resistance because it enabled them to establish political communities, and to provide homes for single runaways throughout the Caribbean area. Craton (1982) claims maronage became a phenomenon when groups of slaves came together in an organization of an effective band with an ability to defend, feed and demographically sustain itself either by new recruits, or, ultimately, through natural increase (61).

Africans removing themselves from direct contact with the slave society, facilitated open rebellions that took place in Jamaica. Some of these are marked by "Cudjoe's war" in 1734 and "Tacky's revolt" in 1760 that in spite of severe losses brought gains in treaties relevant to the economic and political stability of the Maroons (90). In Barbados, between 1645-1701, local planters survived five major "slave plots' within thirty years. The largest was the "Coromantee" rebellion that was plotted in secrecy over a period of years. Similarly between 1687 to 1737, in Antigua, "slave resistance" occurred because whites pushed labour much harder when there were concerns about economic recession and agricultural problems (119). In 1763-1802, Africans in "new colonies" resisted for these reasons: in Grenada, the whites' agenda for a monoculture-sugar-was in conflict with experience of diversity in agriculture; in St. Vincent "where they (Black Caribs) quite
properly regarded the island as their own”; and in Dominica where the mountainous terrain "provided refuge for Caribs and runaways" (140-141). Higman (1984) sums up the masculine traditional view of resistance as defined in a struggle for power.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries slave rebellions were frequently associated with maronage, as overlapping acts in defiance of the slave system. After 1807 maronage became increasingly individualistic, and rebellion took on creolized forms. No slave rebellion in the British Caribbean was successful, in the sense that the St. Domingue (Haiti) revolution was successful, but the 1831/2 rebellion in Jamaica played a crucial role in hastening emancipation, while less extensive rebellions in other colonies shook the structure of slave society (393).

In a more recent work, Richard Burton's (1997) Afro-Creole examines resistance through cultural performances in Jamaica. Burton looks at resistance in the creativity of plays performed particularly at Christmas time, and in the telling of Anancy stories. Performance served to flatter the planters and enabled the enslaved to achieve some gains in everyday life. Further resistance to labour injustices and brutal punishments was continuously strategized even in the post-emancipation era and up to the labour strikes of the early twentieth century that I will discuss later.

According to Mangru (1996), the militancy of Indians drew strengths from "powers of resilience and fortitude" during the Middle Passage beginning in 1838.22 During the first few years of the system, Indians in Guyana, for instance, negotiated strategies that appeared to have accommodated the discriminatory practices of White planters. However, they later manifested resistance in activities such as "strikes and riots" or they engaged the passive resistance "malingering, feigning ignorance of authority instructions, desertion, suicide…” (2). These patterns of resistance disrupted the White man's image of them as "docile and conservative" (3). Serious disturbances took the forms of shootings on several plantations culminating in two that are noteworthy.
In 1924 "the Ruimveldt riots" took place; and in 1948, "the Enmore tragedy" (269). These acts of resistance were against the tyranny and oppression arising from withheld wages, and insufficient pay. Also "a violent confrontation between workers and authorities" supported by the British Guiana Labour Union, caused tension and involvement of numerous people including Blacks (182). As the period of indentureship came to an end in the late 1930s, resistance movements for Indians changed from localized protest, to become more politicized and organized to address issues of labour exploitation. This is when "the first indigenous leaders in the late 1930s would emerge to articulate Indian grievances" (201).

In the Anglophone Caribbean, Indian resistance was not only used against labour injustices. It also worked well to protect cultural/religious practices. In Trinidad and Tobago, Indian indentured workers maintained their Hindu and Muslim religions and resisted Christianity and becoming 'creole'. Attempts by some people to harmonize African and Indian cultures increased the sentiments held by the elite class of their barbarism and savagery (Singh 1988). One of the notable incidents took place in the form of the Muharram Massacre of 1884 when the government opposed the performance of Hosay on the streets. When the Indians persisted with celebrations of Hosay, the ruling class felt threatened and retaliated by shooting.

Like the Indians in Guyana, the Chinese throughout the Caribbean used similar strategies of accommodation together with confrontation. Look Lai (1993) writes of the tendency of the Chinese to frequently desert the plantations after an initial accommodation of the system with hard work, and finding that earnings were lower than they anticipated. Added to that, in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana the Chinese formed rebel gangs and
engaged in praedial larceny. Acts like these could be considered as standard resistance among oppressed peoples. Similarly in the case of the Chinese these acts escalated into rebellions, one of which took place in Trinidad and Tobago. This incident culminated in the incarceration of many of the ringleaders while others were sent back to the estates. But, according to Look Lai (1993),

> despite the undoubtably large number of discordances at work in the relationship with Chinese immigrants and the plantation system, a surprisingly fair number of them did tolerably well within it confines and limitations, and a small handful even managed to very well (102).

This acculturation could be viewed as a form of resistance in which economic survival would indicate ways to oppose colonial opposition.24

Resistance was also reflected in the activities of an ethnic group formed by the processes of miscegenation. The group consisted of creole-born people referred to as "Coloureds" that is, those of mixed heritages, predominantly offspring of white plantocracy who were in resistance to imperial rule. As Carl Campbell (1992) informs us the many "civil disabilities" due to race undermined the confidence of "coloured" people (16-20). At times they suffered humiliation and were subject to such things as disenfranchisement; limitations on property; lack of access to professions; and ineligibility for government positions. These 'disabilities' formed the basis for collective resistance of elite free coloured planters throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, "which persuaded the British government to investigate their case and allow civil equality in 1829" (275).

Another form of coloured resistance was targeted in the early eighteenth Century at the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church in Trinidad and Tobago. A protest for equity in the Church raised the support of 600 people. This caused the Governor to rescind the term of imprisonment of the leader and put him under house arrest.25 Histories of
resistance among the educated and coloured upper middle class, erase the myth of permanent privilege that is assumed to have come with positions outside the working class. I now explore the locations of Caribbean women in the historical process and how they take up resistance to opposed systems of domination/subordination.

**Resistance activities: Women in the Caribbean**

In the Anglophone Caribbean, women of the major groups-European, African, and Asian experienced, in the different contexts of servitude, slavery and indentureship, the extreme harshness of labour, brutality in punishment, sexual exploitation and the denial of freedom. Because of the prolonged existence of slavery, racial prejudices, and stereotyping (mostly built on skin colour) the largest majority, African women, experienced gross indignities (Shepherd 1995; Reddock 1994; Bush 1990; Dadzie 1990; Beckles 1989; Higman 1984; Mathurin 1975). All groups of women, however, resisted.

Resistance began for White women with their willingness to travel "long distances to Bristol in order to indenture themselves in Barbados". This suggests their defiance (Beckles 1989b:46). These women's actual lives give their origins as "voluntary servants" and "labouring white women" who were "considered unfit for marriage" (47). Beckles also notes

1715 census of Barbados, for example, lists a number of free born mulattos, who were parented by white women and 'black' and 'coloured' men (132).

They often led lives of interculturation, copying the customs of African women. As well, their entering into market trade could also be acknowledged as a form of resistance.
The "anti-slavery" consciousness of African women, fostered through their initial resistance "to capture and sale" forged distinct patterns of resistance at the point of embarkation and continued in the plantations (Beckles 1988:34). Some of the women, influenced by a cultural tradition of dying to reunite with ancestors, chose suicide to resist indignities they suffered on board the slave ships. During the settling period in the Caribbean, there were those who incited overt rebellions that included arson, assault on managers, and poisoning. Others abandoned the plantations to set up Maroon communities, engaged in economic sabotage, and withdrew their labour (Dadzie 1990). Everyday resistance created disturbances on plantations, such as malingering and similar behaviour. According to Bush (1990), African women "did not succumb to apathy and resignation" because of the hard and monotonous work on plantations (56). Records show "women slaves to be more troublesome than men" proving very difficult to manage, and never succumbing to "apathy and resignation (56). Their vengeful behaviour, that was manifested both in field and domestic labour, widened to their participation in communal resistance against the brutal system of slavery. This might account for the notion that African women's resistance was widespread in initiating and maintaining Maroon communities, and being embattled with the colonizers, as evident in the Nanny legend.28

African women also developed economic independence when restriction to field work or domestic work became a struggle to survive. For instance, in the economic history of Jamaica, historians have argued that in the internal marketing system,

not only were women the primary agents in the independent, economic culture of the slave community, but that they displayed a propensity for marketing which the slave owners recognized as beyond the ability to contain by legislation (Beckles 1989a:72).
Similarly Indian women in Jamaica, who were forced out of the plantations after the end of the indentureship system that precipitated social and industrial changes in the 1850s, initiated "income-gathering activities". Relocating in the city of Kingston, they began market-gardening and peddled their products from house to house or to retail shops (Shepherd 1993:248). Paulette Kerr (1995) argues that some African and Coloured women who found themselves victimized by gendered approaches to labour staged their own idea of developing economic independence. They became lodging-housekeepers and "strategised" rather than give in to their circumstances. The hospitality trade, in all likelihood would have facilitated all of a Caribbean womanhood—her spirituality; her nurturing; her flexibility and her sexuality (197-212).

In plantation economies, labour exploitation was considered the norm for both sexes. Sexual exploitation, however, increased the vulnerability of subordinated African women. For economic reasons, planters and other White men in authority claimed their right to African women's bodies. But passive resistance was apparent when some African and Coloured women strategised "social-sexual relations with free men, particularly whites" to reduce their chances for both labour and sexual exploitation (Beckles 1989a:67). This non-violent strategy by Caribbean women entering relations of concubinage, may have countered the inhumanity of sexual abuse. Or, it might have been an option to reduce the sordid conditions of slavery, as the master's children, though categorized as slaves, were materially provided for in the long term (Beckles 1989). Other African women resorted to violent strategies of resistance, such as abortion and infanticide (Bush 1990).
With respect to Indian women in Jamaica, Verene Shepherd (1995) states that the "creolised" resisted early betrothal and opted for a choice of mate that could improve their lives financially (248). Rhoda Reddock (1994) writes that in Trinidad, Indian women struggled to gain and maintain self-autonomy. While there are no records of women's voices, official evidence in a court matter where a woman was charged for leaving her husband, shows us,

women had some choice in the establishment of relationships and could of their own accord leave one husband for another or have relationships with more than one man (43).

**Resistance activities: Caribbean women engage in politically motivated movements.**

Caribbean women were always heavily involved in collective acts of resistance on plantations. According to Beckles (1988), they murdered White men in "self-defence and preservation of dignity" (164). They ran away. Maronage was "the most commonly reported anti-slavery action", which, when successful, allowed women the opportunity for community and cultural practices, denied in the plantation system. He further states that it was an easy strategy, that crossed island boundaries, and enabled an "aspect of communal black anti-slavery solidarity in the face of white power" to be expressed (165).

Coloured and middle class Caribbean women took initiatives against slavery, for instance in Antigua, according to Moira Ferguson (1993) there was a well known struggle against white and Christian religious practices in the pro-emancipation days. The ambivalence of the Methodist church towards the abolition movement caused Anne and Elizabeth Hart to establish the first Caribbean Sunday school in their home, that accommodated both African children of the enslaved and economically deprived White children. One of the sisters, Anne, having a strong religious faith, proclaimed her belief
in human equality in her book History of Methodism, "a spiritual autobiography", and severely criticised white superiority that produced racial and social apartheid in the island (17). The activities of the Hart sisters, as Ferguson describes, before the abolition of slavery, would seem to project the route of the post-emancipation and colonial women's movement in the Caribbean. I discuss in later paragraphs, this movement of the beginning of the mid-twentieth century, that similarly brought together Caribbean women's nurturing skills and strategies of political resistance.

On the question of Indian women in political movements, Mangru (1996) reports that following one of the most serious disturbances that took place in Essequibo, Guyana in 1872, several workers were arrested, and

a fascinating feature about the arrest was the active participation of indentured women who were armed with hackia sticks (74).

On another occasion, the same scholar reports in Guyana, a crowd of "200 infuriated strikers armed with cutlasses and shovels" attacked a manager's house protesting against insufficient wages, they hurled "volley after volley" of missiles through windows, "the artillery being replenished" by Indian women (122). Reports of Indian women's participation have begun to be increasingly explored to indicate that they "were inside and outside the political struggle" (Mohammed 1998:13). As I have shown in the histories of Caribbean women, and the majority groups in particular, their acts of resistance featured the use of the ethic of independence. They acted according to their consciences and in concert with the needs of the wider community. I now discuss how resistance took the form of community organizing in the twentieth century.

Resistance activities: early twentieth century: During the 1930s and following the labour uprisings in the Caribbean, a Caribbean women's movement emerged (Reddock 1994;
French 1988; Ford-Smith and French unp. 1986). According to Reddock (1994), women's movements in countries of the Caribbean, were influenced by imperial relations with feminist movements both in North America and the United Kingdom. These movements had both liberal and conservative agendas towards social change. That is, while Caribbean feminists were engaged in organizing around the private or womanly sphere of Caribbean women's lives, they repeatedly expressed their demands for establishing a stronghold in the public sphere. Honor Ford-Smith and Joan French (1986) add that women's movement in Jamaica reflected that country's need to find solutions to unemployment, low wages, and other inequities while emphasizing the "housewifisation process" as suitable for women (324). For example, according to Ford-Smith (1998), in Jamaica, the Women's Social Service Club  

focused on the provision of social services and the training of women in domestic work (16).

Yet, among the suggestions this organization published in the Jamaican press—*The Gleaner*—in 1919, they wanted to agitate for women's rights to be represented at all levels of government; and, to notify the public of their ability to prove women's equality to men, because they possess "some qualities [that are] eminently desirable, are vastly superior" (11,12). Similarly, at the first Conference of the Coterie of Social Workers, Trinidad and Tobago, in 1936, female representatives who came from Guyana, St. Lucia, and Barbados delivered speeches about women's political rights. This Conference was both a site of resistance to women's conformity to patriarchy and one of liberation and achievement. Among the resolutions it formulated were: to regionalize the movement; and to call not only for Caribbean women's increased participation in social work activities, but for the representation of Caribbean women politically at all levels of government (Reddock 1994).
Its founder, Audrey Jeffers, was nominated to the Legislature in 1951, and all her political activities were supported by the membership. At the same time, the Coterie continued its projection of middle class respectability as well as to seek the social reform of others (Reddock 1994). In summary, I suggest that implicit in the thrust of Caribbean middle class women to accommodate the imperial status, there was a form of resistance by virtue of their capabilities to perform as women in the public sphere.

Resistance can be categorized differently according to race and class. For example, both in Jamaica and in Trinidad and Tobago, the "liberal maternalism" (Ford-Smith 1998) of the upper and middle classes produced tension between the use of privilege in order to further self interest along the lines of gender, and the struggle to colonize the underclass woman to achieve respectability. Briefly, a few examples illustrate my point—Beatrice Grieg (Trinidad and Tobago) a White woman who was socialist oriented, was extremely active in struggles for women's rights (Reddock 1994). Nellie Latrielle (Kilburn) (Jamaica) also white, and active in demanding political rights for women was a founding member of the Women Social Service Club in 1918. This club became the most prominent Jamaican women's organization of the early twentieth century (Ford-Smith 1998; Vassell 1993).

In Trinidad and Tobago, The Coterie of Social Workers was founded in 1921 by Audrey Jeffers, a Black woman of property-owning class, and a Black nationalist, who was interested in women's equality. This organization has maintained social work institutions throughout the country to date (Reddock 1994). Their narratives account for resistance activities designed to help the 'underprivileged' and to raise the status of middle class women. These activities were carried out among a number of women who were free to engage in racial and social upliftment activities and who found ways to achieve economic
independence. There was also the example of the Trinidad Home Industries and Self-Help movement, 1901-1938, that was based on Jamaica's Lady Musgrave Self-Help Society. While perceived as a charitable organization, it was known to have "encouraged and facilitated economic activities centred around womanly skills", for which these Caribbean middle class women received earnings (Reddock 1994:163). Thus resistance was not only about 'doing good' and social achievement, it was also about seeking to transform gender practices that denied Caribbean women their 'rights', and helped to redefine their identities.

Working class women were engaged in their own strategies of resistance. They belonged to the labour movement and were represented in leadership and rank and file positions (Reddock 1994; Ford-Smith and French 1986). For Trinidad and Tobago, Reddock (1994) informs us that African and Indian women, as labourers and domestic workers on the sugar estates, were fully involved in a series of disturbances in both the urban and rural areas. The resistance that Caribbean women showed in sites of disturbances resonated in the politics of class and gender difference for these women, as she writes,

the fact that one witness actually referred to them [women] as prostitutes shows the different ways in which militant political behaviour is perceived for women and for men (152).

In Jamaica as well, Ford-Smith and French (1986) discuss how working class women engaged in the several industrial strikes both in the cities and in rural areas, and were perceived in newspaper reports as being more stubborn than men in demanding and sticking to their claim (265).

In addition to that, the fact that women participated in industrial strikes, joined unions and became market entrepreneurs demonstrate the strategies of resistance used to counter
colonial and patriarchal domination (Ford-Smith and French 1986). Moreover, in Trinidad and Tobago, when British styled hierarchical structures were implemented in local unions and denied workers’ rights to speak for themselves in their struggles some women formed their own unions (Reddock 1994).

There is an absence of data to permit my discussing comprehensively the activities of women in seven of the other Caribbean countries represented by women in my study. However, according to Ford-Smith and French (1986) in 1960, there was a number of women’s social welfare organizations with similar intent to those I have discussed situated in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. For example, in the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean, there were the Federation of Women’s Institutes; the Montserrat Women’s League; and, the Barbados Women’s Self-help Association, to name but a few. Yet, these were all predominantly inclusive of Caribbean women of African heritage and mixtures. There has been no documentation of Indian women organizing during this period in the Caribbean region.36

To complete the map of Caribbean women’s resistance, I selected two women’s community organizations whose work epitomized the presence of agency to transform the historical construction of these women’s subjectivities. Each organization worked in different ways during the period following the surge of national independence in the 1960s, to address community social injustices in the Caribbean.37 First, the Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT) founded in 1971, as a "social action" organization, by middle-class women, because political advances in that country had created widespread economic hardships. This Association was open to

all women irrespective of political convictions, nationality, religious opinions, nationality, religious opinion, race or colour 38
It organized around consumerism and, during the five years of its existence, disrupted the ways male strongholds in government and business carried out consumer practices. HATT's activities caused these women to develop a strong consciousness about Caribbean women's identity, power and gender relations. As Faith Wiltshire (1990), an ardent community educator/worker and executive member writes,

HATT was not just a consumer movement. It was really a women's movement which used consumerism as its drawing card. During its years of operation it helped many women to achieve high feelings of self-esteem.39

While the resistance activities were educational and feminist for HATT members, they were confrontational for the state and economic leadership.40

Sistren in Jamaica was similar to HATT but different. In 1977, Sistren was founded as a feminist organization in a particular context of political transformation, as Honor Ford-Smith (1989) relates, it was

the organized movement in a general sense [that] created the context out of which Sistren grew because it legitimized women's examination of their own struggles (21).

A mix of middle class and working class women of Jamaica, who formed this group established practices by which they made the personal political, and examined their lives in the contexts of race, class and gender politics. It was their theory and practices that differentiated this organization from all others in the Caribbean throughout the century. Unlike HATT's consumer strategy in research, Sistren used theatre to analyze collective experiences and to seek to resolve pressing issues (Ford-Smith 1987, 1989).

Resistance in Caribbean women's activism of the twentieth century was a mark of responsiveness to challenges found in the politics of patriarchy and imperialism. On the whole, the process of women's organizing was continuously inflicted with class biased and
These influences, however, that were greatly reduced during the last two decades to focus on the theoretical question of Caribbean woman in the nation. For example, there have been organizations of diverse female activists' groups showing relative independence in pursuing 'women's issues' mainly throughout the region together. There are also with university-based women's studies departments and an independent feminist research organization. Yet, generally speaking, Caribbean women's activism historically exemplifies a complex form of resistance that challenges patriarchal dominance. Mohammed (1985) argues that Trinidad and Tobago women's organizing is no longer reformist, but that it challenges the production of power and social organization in the nation as these affect women's positions.

I have provided a linear approach to discuss the making of the Caribbean, with the presence of indigenous groups and the subsequent migration of groups from various sources to provide population and labour in terms of capitalism. I further discuss how these groups chose to identify themselves not as static and complicit with the governance of the region but in continuous resistance. I now turn to examine the concept of creolization that enables scholars and others to perceive how this chain of events may have produced particular cohesiveness in a social and cultural identity for the Caribbean region.

**Creolization: a cultural marker of Caribbean identity.** It is important to understand a formation of a Caribbean identity imagined through a process of creolization. This process attempts to constitute Caribbean peoples of the region through a homogeneous mass. Or, it establishes that these peoples have a common culture, in spite of the fact that this identity—creole—can have different meanings in different contexts, that is between island-countries. I now discuss the ideas held by some Caribbean scholars-Nettleford 1970, 1982;
Brathwaite 1971; Bolland 1992; Allahar 1993 and Burton 1997—for the purpose of explaining a conceptual definition of creolization. I want to find the basis for collective identity and difference in an identity of Caribbean women in my sample, that can inform how their subjectivities may form a part of this creolization process.

The term "creole" has different meanings in separate geographical contexts. Each meaning has the capacity to influence thought (Bolland 1992; Brathwaite 1971). According to Brathwaite (1971) it was derived from

Spanish words criar (to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle); and colono (a colonist, a founder, a settler) into crillo: a committed settler, one identified with the area of settlement, one native to the settlement though not ancestrally indigenous to it (xiv, xv).

Colloquially speaking, people in the Caribbean refer to 'creole' meaning 'born here'—the result of blending and mixing the Old World with the New in terms of a political and social organization. (Bolland 1992; Brathwaite 1971). This conceptualizing has helped Brathwaite (1971) and others to define creole society, yet it has not been adequate for a theoretical definition of the creolization process. This definition needs to emerge with a much broader scope than is apparent in traditional thought (Bolland 1992). Oddly enough Caribbean scholars of ethnic backgrounds equate 'creolization' with Black culture (Allahar 1993; Ho 1989; and Mohammed 1988).

Brathwaite (1971) treats creolization in the traditional sense, as a process that merges African and European cultures as major components in contestation to develop a monolithic culture. His Jamaican society of 1770-1820 struggles to formulate its own hegemony out of the derivatives of a European social organization, translated to suit an internal plantation economy. Brathwaite's creole society consisted of "multiracial" groupings in which the elite and the labouring classes simultaneously fended off conflicts
Brathwaite maps a colour/class stratification to show whites, coloureds, and blacks, engaging from disparate positions in both an interculturation process and interracial mixing. This in turn laid a foundation for their interdependence. Brathwaite disrupts the stereotype of a segregated system of black and white; coloured and white, as well as coloured and black. He argues that all groups, black, coloured, and white, experienced socialization and identification differently within their positions as they move between points of acceptance to points of resistance of British culture. But it was a society struggling to produce an indigenous society by constructing a composite of African and European borrowings and re-creations. However, Brathwaite claims the creolization process was marred by the self-seeking desire in non-European creoles to improve their status, so they imitated "the master" (299). Brathwaite writes,

> It was one of the tragedies of slavery and the conditions under which creolization had to take place, that it should have produced this kind of mimicry; should have produced such 'mimic-men'... (300).

His claim was that members of the African middle class in Jamaica eighteenth/nineteenth century erased the richness of African culture to survive the hegemony of imperialism by copying British culture. An indigenous language together with arts and culture would have occurred and led to forming an identity that could have been essentially Jamaican (Caribbean). Added to that, within the "intimate area of sexual relationships" that disrupted segregation of whites and creoles, "the most significant-and lasting-inter-cultural creolization took place" (303). For Brathwaite (1971) transculturation took place in a Jamaican creole society that was replete with attitudes of discrimination; political inefficiencies; the horrible degradation of slavery; and, the imitation, by Blacks of White
culture. Despite all this for Brathwaite (1971) it was a society that organized and controlled life in a particular unifying way. By validating these formations of creolized institutions, Rex Nettleford, Director of the Jamaica's Dance Theatre endorses Brathwaite's work.

In 1982, Nettleford takes Brathwaite's notion of transculturation of Africans and Europeans further. In other words, he recognizes there is a complexity to the creolization process, because it is not a two-way process: master and servant. It operates at different levels of "power, domination, resistance and violence" by generations of Africans and Europeans, "inducted by native born and bred" as a Caribbean experience, while the aboriginal presence deepens "the complexity" (185). Yet in his earlier work, Nettleford (1970) stresses there is a struggle to expose the prominence of African culture as opposed to British culture and to harmonize into what he terms "Caribbean experience". In 1982 he asserts this historical creolizing process has produced a continuum to embrace newly arrived immigrants-"East Indians, Chinese, Arabs and even the more recent transitory North American visitor" (185). Nettleford suggests that all these groups must conform to the creolization process that contains major creative contributions of the African and European presence, and indeed the African-Creole. He makes the suggestion because the uniqueness of the Caribbean identity, that he applauds, needs to be continued. In my view, Brathwaite and Nettleford believe creolization or the creole society is a synthesized entity that must be continued in terms of the fundamental narratives that shaped and dominated African/Creole/European experiences in the historical process.

How is my sample of Caribbean women's subjectivities located in this situation? How does the creolized identity account for class differences and similarities that appear in my data? What are the provisions of entry for a non-African, or non-European identity
in the process? Who regulates the process? Several Caribbean scholars argue, in contrast to Nettleford (1970, 1982) and Brathwaite (1971) that creolization is uneven, unstable and open. For, example, Anton Allahar, a Caribbean-Canadian scholar, critiques the current defining of creolization that states it is a "regional unifier, which transcends even nationalism", a culturally homogenizing process. He asserts these theoretical positions are not satisfactory enough to deal with diversity and difference in the Caribbean region itself. Allahar rejects the totalizing of Caribbean culture on the basis of the variants that exist in each country at political, industrial and social levels. So, for him, there cannot be a "single process of creolization" (71). For him, creolization is different for those who have the same ethnic background but live in separate countries of the Caribbean. He writes,

it is just not possible to treat the Into-Caribbean populations as an undifferentiated group. For in Guyana, where they comprise the majority of the population, the East Indians are far less creolized than their Trinidadian counterparts. Trinidad is also a more industrially developed society...(79).

In contrasting the economic conditions of both Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, he suggests creolization is synonymous with modernization, and is produced through industrialization. Hence the creolizing process is dissimilar in each country of the region. These perspectives led me to look at how people of other ethnicities view the process of creolization.

Christine Ho (1989), a Caribbean American scholar, gives us practical examples of how Chinese groups assimilated creole culture, during the early to mid-twentieth century. These groups consisted of Hakka and Cantonese originating in China and
emigrated as indentured workers to Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica. She defines creolization in the Caribbean as

the process whereby populations that are neither European nor African become enculturated in Caribbean (Afro-European) culture. 47

To illustrate how the process applies, Ho (1989) analyses reports of Chinese assimilation in three countries, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica from which I want to abstract two issues that affect creolization: male/female relationships, and marginalization. To confirm Brathwaite's (1971) earlier point about the power of intimate sexual relationships, Ho's report states that in all three countries many Chinese men had liaisons of marriage or concubinage with Black women, claiming

these intimate relationships with creole women must have encouraged creolization of the Chinese men and enhanced their acceptance by the creole people who surrounded them. These creole (mulatto and black) wives would become powerful agents of creolization of the children, knowing only creole culture themselves. This ensured that subsequent generations would be creolized (9).

In addition, Chinese Guyanese local-born women "adamantly opposed" marrying China-born men in Guyana (7). In Trinidad and Tobago, while the norm was in favour of a Chinese spouse, there existed large numbers of racially mixed Chinese. This situation enables her to conclude that "the process of creolization had eroded most Chinese institutions and culture" (12). Caribbean Chinese communities in the nineteenth century were produced in a stratified fashion with layers created by race and by native-born versus immigrant Chinese. All this added to the diversities of naming creolization. In my view, this situation repeats the layering of creoles, that in the eighteenth century era, was fashioned on the products of miscegenation, Africans, Europeans, and the arriving immigrants of these two groups.
Marginalization also challenged ways in which Chinese people would assimilate into Caribbean societies. For instance, Ho (1989) notes that successful mobility caused Chinese to be targets of violence in Guyana and Jamaica. This was not so in Trinidad and Tobago where there was a process to accommodate creolization in rapid fashion. Here, strategies consisted of intermarriage and sustaining a stratified coloured-Chinese population, and by conversion to Christianity to gain access to formal institutions such as education. Nevertheless, in each of the countries in Ho’s report, Chinese established social organizations, some of which consisted of "multi-generational membership" and most were centres for sports, recreation and celebrations (11). Activities in these spaces both in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, Ho states, could hardly be called 'Chinese' as 'creole' orchestras played 'creole' music to which people responded. Ho’s analysis weakens Allahar’s point, since Chinese of wealth in Jamaica resisted creolization, while those in Trinidad and Tobago saw there were benefits and used strategies to adopt it. However, in Jamaica of the three countries, where assimilation was the most difficult, Chinese remained mostly isolated and maintained effective social centres, educational, health and welfare institutions. Such establishments enabled them to maintain "cultural distinctiveness from Creoles and perpetuated their social isolation" (15). Ho’s analysis, like Allahar’s, concludes that there is differentiation in the ways that ethnic communities avail themselves of the creolization process.

Patricia Mohammed (1988), a Caribbean feminist scholar, using a definition similar to that of previous scholars, refers to creolization as,

A derivative of the word "creole" used in Trinidad to refer to descendants of African slaves to distinguish them from indentured Indian immigrants, "creolization" was viewed as synonymous with absorption of black culture at the expense of one’s own-a process referred to as acculturation."
Mohammed argues that unlike the Chinese, Indian communities did not use intimate relations to assimilate into an ongoing culture. She writes that

> despite the scarcity of Indian women, sexual relations between Indian men and African or Creole women were extremely rare.\(^5\)

As I discussed earlier many Indian women arrived as independent indentured workers yet they were subjugated to Indian patriarchy and to the Indian nationalism to be "the keepers of the culture" (383). Moreover, Indian communities, because of the occupations of indentured workers, were "culturally" separated from "creole" society. In addition, the mutual contempt among Africans and Indians, inhibited the progress of creolization. Mohammed asserts that creolization occurred in general for Indians when industrial transformation and depression in the sugar industry, forced Indian communities to restructure, and slowly increased intercultural relations within in the larger society. The point of entry through acculturation for Indian women, often missed by sociologists, was manifested in the calypsos of the day (385). This art form recorded the instances where Indian women changed their names to English; or where it was alleged they were consorting with men of other races. Yet this picture is not totally accurate for Mohammed, as there was still to be seen the separatism occurring in certain places, to maintain traditions that could enforce Indian women into domesticity.\(^5\) The picture is also not generalizable as Indian women's acculturation was dependent on their religious affiliation, and the democratization of education that a large percentage of the Indian population embraced. It was issues arising from political movements or the effectiveness of modernization that influenced the ethnic practices in the Indian community for Indian women. There was free education for boys and girls. Indian households were nuclearized. Indian diets included 'creole' dishes. The change in traditional dress to western style outfits
was apparent. Much of these changes were observed in the changed attitudes of the young who pursued inter-ethnic relationships. Findings of this nature cause Mohammed (1988) to suggest there needs to be a differentiation made "between creolization and modernization" so as to recognize the significance of a political and social commitment to a new society (392).52

All these views take a unilateral, one-dimensional perspective to provide a sense of thinking about creolization. My conclusion has come through Bolland's (1992) dialectical analysis, and Burton's (1997) re-thinking of issues of "cultural creation" in Jamaica (3). Bolland's analysis confirms my own interpretation of the history of the formation of a Caribbean identity. It is an identity that emerges from a process that structured and organized many diverse peoples and cultures. The imperialist paradigm produced genocide, servitude, slavery and indentureship from which a construction of Caribbean (creole) society emerges. It is difficult to categorize this society in terms of the dichotomy Black/White, or as Bolland argues against seeing it, as different groups responding to each other and to their environments (64). Like him, I suggest that we view creolization through the overarching system of domination/subordination; people's use of agency in resistance; the interconnectedness of women's histories; and the interrelatedness of women's experiences to produce different, yet similar, subjectivities. Bolland (1992) locates this thinking in

the dialectical analysis of society [which] draws attention to the interrelated and mutually constitutive nature of 'individual', 'society', and 'culture' and of human agency and social structure (65).

He sees the flaw in analyzing the creolization process as though people are engaged in 'dropping in', or in a blending and mixing exercise, on a structure determined or regulated
by some past historical precedents. One of his main arguments is that Caribbean peoples engaged in both opposition and resistance to dominance, that is also, Burton's (1997) point about the experiences of Africans in relation to British. These scholars reject ideas that suggest people are docile and receptive to the formations of the society. For example, Burton's focus on the "culture of the opposition" found in religious and festive forms, provides an analysis of the everyday, and even private practices that people perform in relation to domination. These practices are not innocuous, they are subversive (11). Bolland (1992) is of the same view, in that he asserts

we should not look just for those 'outward' external manifestations that suggest either assimilation (acculturation) or its opposite ('survivals' or 'retentions'). For obvious reasons, cultural resistance in social contexts of domination is often not externally manifested, and the modes of action of those whose status is subordinate often conceal their contributions to the formation of culture (67).

This thinking of the intricate dimensions around which culture evolves, informs my notion of the creolization process as existing both in the private and public spheres of the lives of Caribbean peoples. In the private sphere it takes the form of recreating customs and practices for the individual and her/his community to develop strategies to adjust to a new milieu of political, social, and physical environments. My opinion is that recreating events puts agency in individuals' actions to resist, making alternative arrangements and addressing judgments about issues of difference. It might have been an activity that occurred among groups as they arrived in sequence in the Caribbean, from Great Britain, Africa and Asia, already with a diversity of tools for social relations—language, taste, knowledge. In other words, migrants and even persons born in the Caribbean during the fifteenth to early twentieth century, had to construct agendas to meet the socio-cultural and
political needs of Caribbean societies for which they, by their very presence, in spite of their marginalization, must have felt responsible.\textsuperscript{54}

In the public sphere the creolization process manifests itself when individual groups struggle to redefine themselves and recreate a cultural identity, so as to retain an autonomy while making disparate contributions to the whole Caribbean. I discussed earlier resistance activities around rights in examples such as the Black Caribs in St. Vincent (Craton 1986); the Coloured populations’ claim for civil liberties (Campbell 1992). The rebellious activities of Indians in Guyana (Mangru 1996); and the less overt demonstrations by the Chinese in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Jamaica (Look Lai 1993; Ho 1989). These and other similar struggles of resistance and acculturation figure in the creolization process. For example, African and Indian women resisted the institutions of marriage in religious doctrines, their opposition transformed subjectivities for women and adds to the process (Shepherd 1995; Braquette Williams 1995). Another example is in the nineteenth century a cultural contribution was made by the Chinese by introducing the game of “\textit{whé whé}” (Howard 1987:91). (This has currently become elevated within the scope of national lotteries in Trinidad and Tobago). Yet another example can be found in individuals’ claiming and providing self-definitions in terms of their hybrid cultures. These claimants often encounter tensions within the larger society that can range from slow acceptance to humiliation.\textsuperscript{55} Incidents like this also become part of the process. I reject the melting pot idea, in which both diversity and multiplicity are lost, because this journey through historical time informs us that populations of Anglophone Caribbean peoples do not constitute a harmonious identity. I contend that the heterogeneity that exists may have influenced both the coherence and overlapping of cultures, in spite of the hegemony of
British politics, culture, language and education to inferiorize any promotion of the indigenous.

I know that national independence in the Anglophone Caribbean during the twentieth century, was acquired through the voices of greater number of people of African heritage, because a Caribbean-African/British ideology and identity are central in various levels of political governance. Consequently an African Caribbean identity foregrounds scholarly and popular opinion for many, while there are some who interested in segregating identities. I refer to the Afrocentricity present, for example, in the works of C.L.R. James (1984); Rex Nettleford (1982) and Edward Brathwaite (1971); and to the focus analysis on an Indian Caribbean identity, for example, Patricia Mohammed (1995; 1988). I have undertaken to draw attention to the historical texts that purport to show the racial and cultural diversity phased in to the Caribbean region strategically over five centuries in order to foster an economic development that profited mainly European colonizers. I can only come to understand the experiences of my sample through the path I took on that journey. I conclude that a Caribbean woman's identity had to be represented by a sample of that diversity. The diversity does not only represent cultures, languages and heritages. It is the way in which Caribbean consciousness is structured and has emerged from experiences of genocide, servitude, slavery and indentureship.

**How I would explore this identity.** The challenge of this study is to explore identity without essentializing race or creating the specific Caribbean identity. For this reason the study does not quantify activities of Caribbean women's survival. It seeks to tell Caribbean women's stories from these women's own sense of empowerment. It takes seriously the self-defining process that enables us to know who they are. These stories are
subjective experiences in the context of struggles in their communities against racism and sexism in Canada. These experiences bear some relation, for many, to discriminatory practices of colour and class in the Caribbean. In both contexts they survived. This methodology to historicize these experiences, provides an understanding of a construct of Caribbean subjectivities, and in particular, Caribbean women's subjectivities. I make the connection between Caribbean peoples as subjects of history and as agents of resistance.

I formulate a hypothesis: there exists something that can be called a 'Caribbean subjectivity' of which there is a 'Caribbean woman's subjectivity' that is constructed on resistance for survival. I need to do this because, first, I have grounded my analysis in the historical experience of Caribbean peoples to make that connection to a subjectivity. Second, my theoretical base is that the legacy emerging from their histories, has constructed Caribbean women as distinct identities with knowledge and values that reflect a particular historical process. Caribbean women though largely erased from Caribbean male discourse on the development of colonial societies in the Caribbean region, have had tremendous responsibility in building nationhood. In fact, 'woman' as subject in the Caribbean context has been socially produced as 'other'. Historically, when it was convenient to planters, it was made significantly either opposite to 'man' or same in the systems of slavery, indentureship and colonialism. These systems engineered and regulated how Caribbean women's subjectivities would be constructed. Yet, Caribbean women's lived experiences have displayed agency not only to formulate their identities in multiple ways but to struggle for social change. Thus this hypothesis guides me to ask some fundamental questions of the participants in my sample about their childhood experiences.
It also allows me to search for patterns in their narratives that might expose how these women relate to domination in order to define themselves as Caribbean women. It is on the basis of this hypothesis that I organize my research design that follows.

ENDNOTES

1. A Creole translation of the history of different peoples

2. These are two terms used by Hilary McD. Beckles (1989a; 1987) in his texts to describe how whites perceived the actions of enslaved African women.


4. See Benedict Anderson (1991). *Imagined Communities; reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso. I borrow Anderson's (1991) notion of "imagined communities" because his definition embraces the ways in which the Caribbean was created by European colonizers who with a profit motive, ensured that the population consisted of marginalized peoples from diverse areas of the world. The people in the process of history, would imagine they belong to it, with the impossibility of knowing the others who would become part of it, yet all could feel there is a oneness which exists with everyone who inhabits the region (pp. 5-7).

5. "The name 'Indian' and the image of the India therefore was like fruit from the same tree of ignorance, racial arrogance and their attendant bigotry." Jan Carew (1989) *Columbus and the origins of racism in the Americas*. Race and Class, 30(1): p.5.


7. Badillo (1995) argues that no proper assessment has taken place to explore the magnitude of Amerindian slavery (97).

8. According to Beckles (1989) these groups consisted of beggars, prisoners, prostitutes, the Irish, the Scots and so on, who were stereotyped along a racial bias and valued accordingly. Anne McLintock (1995). *Imperial Leather*. London and New York: Routledge, supports this view, as it examines the notion of imperialism, and argues it was both central to the definition of the middle-class and in the control of "dangerous classes" and the working class (5).

9. The origins of Africans consisted of Bight of Benin, Sierra Leone, Senegambia and many more from which emerged several ethnic identifications. They populated Trinidad, St. Kitts, St Lucia and so on, as the process of acculturation continued over three centuries.
to produce newcomer Africans and creoles, who by the early nineteenth century, outnumbered the others (Higman 1984). The diverse religious origins of the enslaved included Muslims from five nations—Mandinga, Fula, Susu, Ashanti and Hausa. The followers were educated and wrote Arabic. Many did not succumb to the slaveowners' systemic brutal suppression of their language, their dietary and family life. Thousands became Christian converts only as a subversion of punishment (Afroz 1995).

10. Beckles (1988) writes that during the seventeenth century West African technological development was on the increase and was "characterised by a proliferation of artisanal and professional social groups". Planters never recognized these skills among the enslaved until the 1670s when they were confronted with white labour disputes and pending ruin of their economies.

11. According to Look Lai (1993), Eric Williams, historian, "described the indenture system as the nineteenth-century West Indian plantation counterpart of the encomienda" which is a Spanish style form of liberal slavery (51).

12. The three colonies referred to were: Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana (now Guyana).

13. A summary of statistics shows that during that period, 13,539 Chinese landed in Guyana; 2,837 in Trinidad; 1,152 in Jamaica; 474 in British Honduras, and 23 were born at sea (Table 23:292). The disproportionate ratio in favour of men is indicated in the following statistics for the period 1860-1884: 2,027 females arrived in Guyana; 309 in Trinidad; 122 in Jamaica and 16 in British Honduras (Table 24: 294). Walton Look Lai (1993). *Indentured labour. Caribbean sugar. 1838-1918.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

14. In Mangru's (1996) work, *A History of East Indian Resistance on the Guyana Sugar Estates* he states that recruits were drawn for northern India, and included "batches" from Tamil and the Talinga regions in the south. The majority migrated from the Northwest and places like Oudh, now known as Uttar Pradesh. Indenture workers also represented tribes of "Dhangars, Kols, Oraons, Mundas and Santals from the Chota Nagpur in Bengal" (41).

15. This text consist of copies of original official documents, letters, summaries of commercial activities, list of Jewish militia men, etc. which the author claims will substantiate Jewish history in the Caribbean.

16. The author, Zvi Loker (1991) considers the work a "modest contribution" which could be used to assess the basis for evaluating "the place of Caribbean Jewry in Jewish history" (53).

17. Higman, From Caribs to Black Caribs: the Amerindian roots of servile resistance in the Caribbean. 96.

18. The construction of homogeneous identities of the oppressed in colonial societies was repetitive throughout, and could have been internalized as a reality by the groups
themselves so that in the historical process the distinctions were lost. Hence in postmodern thinking there is a rightful call for self-definition as a means of empowerment (Collins 1990).

19. Some Caribs maintain "anti-colonial communities" on the outskirts of plantations to foster and encourage African anti-slavery (Beckles 1992:7). A remarkable joint confrontation against the British took place in the 1700s with the takeover of St. Vincent by the Black Caribs in two bitterly contested wars, which ended with the deportation of aboriginal peoples to Central America in 1797 (Craton 1986).

20. Higman (1984) informs us that most slaves obtained their freedom through manumission by deed, purchase, will or a gift for some favour. Slaves sometimes would have themselves bought by people who could grant them manumission. Other times, slaves would take advantage of special legislation which provided freedom for being informers of slave rebellions, conspiracies and so on (380).

21. Both texts of Higman 1984:386-393; and Craton 1982:61-66 state that maroon communities could be found in Anguilla, Guyana, Grenada, St. Vincent and Trinidad, although the largest populations were in Jamaica.

22. Mangru (1996), *A History of East Indian Resistance on the Guyana sugar estates, 1869-1948*, states indentureship began on "5 May 1838 with the arrival in British Guiana of the emigrant vessels, *Whitby* and *Hesperus*, carrying a cargo of 396 Indians of whom 22 or six per cent were women" (37).

23. This tragedy which accounted for the police shooting of some Indian sugar workers and the wounding of many has been remembered at Enmore Martyrs (Mangru 1996).

24. The works of Christine Ho (1989). *"Hold the Chow Mein, Gimme Soca": Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica*; and Howard Johnson (1987). *The Chinese in Trinidad in the late Nineteenth Century* concur that resistance to survive was by maintaining a retail trade in the Anglophone Caribbean societies, and by integration interpersonally, culturally and religiously.

25. In 1825, a collective protest led by Francis DeRidder, the educated son of an African enslaved woman and a Dutch planter was imprisoned for his attack on the Roman Catholic Church in Trinidad and Tobago, because of consistent disagreements with its governance both in terms of the his own status and on issues which affected the quality of life in communities in the country (Campbell 1992).

26. Much more work has been done on the African woman as slave than on any to other group of Caribbean women, which justifies my remark.

27. While historians Beckles (1988, 1989); Bush (1981) fully discuss the horrible conditions under which white women experienced their lives, they have also emphasised that race privilege exempted some of them who were granted status mobility as "pioneer wives" and those who became free women for instance, worked as nurses.
28. The legend of Nanny is that she held tremendous in the Maroon community during the First Maroon Wars of the 17th century. She displayed no fear of British soldiers, and it was alleged that the leader of the Windward Maroons refused to accept the British treaty on her advice. So strong was her prominence and power that she has become a mythologized character in Jamaica folk tale as having bouncing bullets off her bottom.

29. According to the diaries of Thomas Thistlewood, 1750-86, Phibbah was an enslaved woman with whom he had a romantic relationship for 32 years of his life in Jamaica. His entries about this working relationship transforms a perception of slave woman, which is neither woman nor feminine. See Douglas Hall (1989). *In miserable slavery*. London: Macmillan Caribbean.

30. They were daughters of an African Caribbean plantation and slaveowner, a poet and "troubleshooter" for the abolitionist movement; and a Coloured mother (Ferguson 1992:7).

31. Patricia Mohammed discusses that Indian women in Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, were caught between their independence as wage earners, and their allegiances to ethnic ideals of womanhood where they were expected to maintain images of the ideal of virtue, passivity and so on. Towards indigenous feminist theorizing in the Caribbean. *Feminist Review*. 59:6-31.

32. Ford-Smith and French (1986) write in their extensive unpublished work of public policy legalized during the 1891-1911, to make women invisible in the work force, by extending 'domestic duties' to field labour and any other work women did in agriculture. They wrote of these acts by the Jamaica government as intensifying a "housewifisation policy", which means redefining women as housewives and relegating their labour to "invisibility and wagelessness" (324). A similar argument was made by Reddock (1994) for Trinidad and Tobago, where the Social Welfare Department established women's work in the site of the home as domestic and unpaid during the same period. Reddock defines "housewifisation process" as the "opposite of 'proletarianization'-whereby women are increasingly defined as non-workers, outside the active labour force, as non-earning housewives" (183).


34. In 1921, the Coterie of Social Workers was founded in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, with mainly educated, middle-class, married and unmarried women, who by the mid-1930s were excluded from careers in the public and teaching service. By 1935, branches of the Coterie were established in San Fernando and Tobago. By 1992, two other branches are listed on the registry of NGOs, located in Baratara and Siparia. According to Reddock (1994), the work in this organization relieved the "frustration of inactivity which these soundly educated women faced; even housework was taken care of by domestic servants" (164). *Women, labour & politics in Trinidad and Tobago*. London & New Jersey: Zed Books.

35. Major labour disturbances occurred throughout the Caribbean during the period 1900 to 1938 which marked twentieth century colonialism. They were the consequences
of post-emancipation/indentureship injustices in poor wages and amenities, followed by the 
1914-1918 war, where Caribbean men were inadequately compensated, and women were 
thrown out of jobs. The provision of resources, such as land to peasants; food supplies; 
maintenance of hygiene; and adequate education by the British had failed miserably to 
satisfy the needs of growing populations throughout the entire region. Hence people rioted 
in frequent successions (Reddock 1994; Williams 1970; Ford-Smith and French 1986).

36. In Trinidad and Tobago a 1992 list of non-governmental women's organizations 
itemizes nine are Indian Trinidadian origin and two of Syrian Lebanese.

37. A critical look at the development of women's organizations in Trinidad and 
Tobago after the sixties, can be found in a two-part article by Patricia Mohammed (1985) 
The Women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago since the 1960s. Concerning Women & 

38. I knew personally the woman who spearheaded HATT, Helen Camps, was born in 
Ireland, and was married to a man of French Creole and mixed heritage, a paediatrician 
in Trinidad and Tobago. Her daring and active participation in this organization for the 5 
years of its existence influenced the political consciousness of many women. The 
organization reflected the mixture of race and class, as was stated in the constitution, 
because it drew the interest of "housewives" and "household workers" together from the 
urban as well as the rural areas of the country.

39. Woman/Speak! Nos. 26 & 27: p. 34.

40. Less than one year after HATT was formed, its membership had grown to 800 
women, from a network of 17 branches, according to Secretary's report for the period 1st 
September 1971 to 30th April 1972. Also I was a member of the Education Committee 
and facilitated consciousness raising workshops at several venues where branches were 
formed.

41. For instance, while Amy Ashwood Garvey inspired middle class woman throughout 
her Caribbean tour in 1953 with her speeches of Black nationalism, her closest ally and 
friend was British Sylvia Pankhurst, leading feminist and member of the British communist 
party. Organizations such as YWCA, the Business and Professional Women's Club and 
the Soroptomists' Club were copies of those which were US and British based.

42. During the eighties and nineties, organizations like the Women Against Free Trade 
Zones (Jamaica); National Union for Domestic Employees; Women Working for Social 
Progress; the National Women's Action Committee (Trinidad and Tobago); Hindu 
Women's Organization of Trinidad and Tobago; Women in Development Unit (UWI 
Barbados); The Caribbean Association of Feminist Research and Action (1985); the 
Grenada National Organization of Women (1995) are indicative of a growing number of 
organizations which reflect the need for Caribbean women to resist a variety of 
oppressions. As well government units are found through the Anglophone Caribbean, for 
example the Bureau of Women's Affairs, Jamaica; and the National Commission for 
Women, Trinidad and Tobago.

44. Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society, xvi.


46. Allahar, Unity and Diversity in Caribbean Ethnicity and Culture, 71.

47. Ho, "Hold the Chow Mein, Gimme Soca": Creolization of the Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica, 3.

48. Christine Ho uses her own autobiography in which she assessed how her standard of living was "creole". She spent her childhood in a suburban neighbourhood of the city, where hers was the only Chinese household in the vicinity. She also went to an Anglican School, and her friends were a mixture of "colored, creolized Chinese, Black and East Indian". She learnt "quintessentially creole" ways of 'liming, that is, spending time in groups drinking and chatting leisurely, and she feted at public dances with creole music played by a multi-racial mix (21, 22).

49. Mohammed, The Creolization of Indian women in Trinidad, 381.

50. Ibid. 384.

51. Mohammed (1988) reflects on Morton Klass' (1961) study of an Indian village which found that Indian culture was rigidly enforced. She exemplifies some of Indian women's subordination, by stating that they were not given the opportunity to receive basic education, and that even when they were educated by Canadian missionaries, they were prepared to become good wives for "the converted Indian men who had become teachers in the Presbyterian schools" (389).

52. In Mohammed (1998) Towards Indigenous Feminist Theorizing in the Caribbean an argument about the process of a Caribbean identity embraces the interconnectedness of Caribbean women's histories. Mohammed frames her argument in the context of the similar but different experiences of the coercion of the colonized by the colonizer. The result, she analogizes, is the Caribbean creates itself as a host of many children with many parents (11).

53. Mangru (1996); Look Lai (1993); Beckles (1989); Higman (1984) provide evidence in their work of the diverse geographical origins, cultures, dialects and languages, and social backgrounds of European, African, Asian, which each of these groups brought, and one can imagine that many may have hoped to return to their native country. So identification with the Caribbean might have been extremely fluid.

54. How else could we account for runaways? for maroon communities? for male and female entrepreneurs? in all the systems of bondage.
55. Distinct ethnicities like Carib; Maroon; Dougla; Coco Panylol who have variant terms of references which interweave through racial mixing with the majority groups try to make statements about their identity.
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DESIGN

How ah do it

The Research Process. In this chapter I discuss my methodological approach to qualitative research. In what follows, I discuss the importance of oral narrative for the research design of this study; the technique I used in selecting my sample of Caribbean women, and my rationale for my actions. I then discuss the limitations of the methods for the overall study; the elements that have created advantages and disadvantages, as well as the similarities and differences my research has to other studies. I close with a discussion of the quality of self-definitions provided by women in the sample.

Choosing the research design. In Chapter III, I concluded by hypothesizing there is a concept named a Caribbean woman’s subjectivity, even though there was no scholarly discussion of this concept that I could find. I knew that the data collected would produce a theoretical explanation of this phenomenon. I decided that qualitative research methods were applicable to my work. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) qualitative research is

any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons’ lives, stories, behaviour but also about organizational functioning, social movement or interactional relationships (17).
I understood from this definition that by using this method that involves personal stories I would get the details to investigate the phenomenon of subjectivity. I wanted to understand what lies behind the survival of Caribbean women in Canada about which little is known, and qualitative research is the kind that "uncovers the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon" (19). Thus I needed to use the narrative form, because like some researchers, I intended to understand the experience that influenced the ways Caribbean women came to survive, and I realized that personal stories are a very rich resource.¹ These narratives that form my data, are significant in this method, because from a feminist viewpoint, they "reveal the frameworks of meaning through which individuals locate themselves in the world and make sense of it" (Personal Narratives Group 1989:22). According to Camilla Stivers,

The sense of self is an essentially narrative phenomenon; people conceive of themselves in terms of stories about their actions in the world, using them to make sense of the temporal flow of their lives. We find identity and meaning as a result of the stories we tell about ourselves or that others tell about us. Therefore, a narrative approach to self-understanding is not a distortion of reality but a confirmation of it (412).

Feminist theory, in critique of the omission of women's lives in the male view of the world, has privileged women's stories in the production of knowledge. As the Personal Narratives Group (1989) points out,

personal narratives of nondominant social groups (women in general, racially or ethnically oppressed people, lower-class people, lesbians) are often particularly effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose a viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal a reality of life that defies or contradicts the rules (7).

Narratives would be especially important precisely because they give insights into how these subjects are produced in language and how subjects see themselves. Joan Scott (1992)
has argued that a modernist view of experience (where individuals have experience) prevents us from asking how selves are produced and makes individuals the starting point of knowledge. I re-emphasize her point, that I discussed in Chapter II, that this view of experience naturalizes social categories in such a way as to make them individual and innate characteristics. Experience, she contends, is legitimized as reflecting something apart from the speaker that contains a universal truth accessible to all.² When I apply postmodern feminist theory to my method, Caribbean women in Canada in my sample who represent women from marginalized groups most likely will reveal in their stories the responses they made to domination, how they see this domination, and their own oppositional ways. I needed to collect these stories to enable me to understand their ways of seeing and their subjectivities as it evolved in response to social relations in the diaspora. I opted to obtain stories from a particular group of women, out of the many groups that exist with personal stories of survival, because they were located in a context that brought them into social and political confrontation with the dominant group. I chose Caribbean women who were likely to be named and name themselves as community activists and educators.

Sample and selection of Caribbean women. I wanted to challenge the apparent uniracial identity of the Anglophone Caribbean by selecting women who were representative of a number of diverse racial identities.³ I wanted to be as inclusive as much as possible, to have the representation resemble the Caribbean of my experience. Table I below which names six racial categories in the Anglophone Caribbean is far more limited than the categories offered by the Caribbean women in my study. In Appendix Ia and Ib: Heritages, demonstrate twenty-five self-ascribed categories.
### Table 1. Ethnic composition of selected Anglophone Caribbean countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country &amp; Population</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>225,565</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1,257</td>
<td>6,362</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>7,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>67,272</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4,433</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>73,207</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>11,816</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>231,330</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>389,760</td>
<td>83,763</td>
<td>2,975</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1,622,473</td>
<td>5,320</td>
<td>29,283</td>
<td>278,015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
<td>231,330</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>389,760</td>
<td>83,763</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is no up-to-date listing for these specific statistics.

The Caribbean, for me, means nations of people diverse in geography, language, politics, culture, religion and race. I think of people and a region, diverse as they are, who have had a common history of almost five centuries of domination and exploitation. As I discussed in Chapter III, the history of domination and resistance began in the fifteenth century with the Aboriginal civilization and continued until the 1960s when countries of the region gained political independence. My attempt with this sample in this study is to reflect the Caribbean I described in Chapter III. The self-ascriptions of women in this study confirm identity is a fluid concept in analysis of the Caribbean and its diaspora. I chose forty-six Caribbean women, whose ages range in categories from twenty-five to fifty-five plus, and who began residence in Canada between 1952 and 1986. This is a period which includes the entry of Caribbean women in Canada through the Domestic Scheme, and from which progressive changes in activism can be discernible. They were of diverse racial heritages, as Appendix I shows. They also occupied multiple class positions in their childhood backgrounds in the Caribbean as defined by themselves, that is: 40% "middle
class"; 27% "lower middle class"; and 33% "poor". Of this group of women 65% came to Canada independently, while 35% came either with parents, or with a spouse, or to meet a parent. Of the dependent group 7 came with parents; 6 with spouses; and 2 women came to meet their parents. Their motives for migrating fit into three categories, (a) education (b) family ties (c) in search of improved opportunities. I selected this group of Caribbean women for their sensitivity and insights into the tensions surrounding survival of Third World migrant women in Canada, and for how these qualities shaped their roles as community activists (Krathowohl 1993:326; 353).

They were not a sample of traditional research for Caribbean-Canadian studies, since they reflect my own political commitment to inclusiveness. I chose women with whom I could identify as part of a social group with whom I have similarities in class and political outlook, like Mama's (1995) research. In one other respect, it is "non-traditional" in that they are activists. Scholars have not yet studied Caribbean-Canadian women in a group as activists neither in the region nor the diaspora.

**Entry into Canada.** Between the years 1968 and 1970, 28% of the sample migrated to Canada. For the other years between 1956 and 1968, and 1971 and 1986, women in my sample arrived in Canada in numbers between 1 and 3 each year. At the point of entry in Canada, 9% were employed in the domestic service; 33% got employment in office and factory routine jobs; 40% entered either university or high school; 16% were hired in professional jobs, for example librarians, social workers, teachers; 2% became Volunteers in Canadian institutions. At the time of interviews I used the following age categories and found these percentages: 25-34: 2%; 35-44: 40%; 45-54: 49%; 55+: 6%.
The context of community organizing. I chose the context of community organizing for two reasons. First, Caribbean women's community work has had very little recognition in Canadian scholarly literature. Next, I have experienced the tremendous energy Caribbean women have used both in the Caribbean region and in Canada to organize community efforts voluntarily in struggles against inequities. I selected Caribbean women in Canada using a mixture of judgmental and 'snowballing' sampling, that involves asking respondents for names of other women (Berg 1998). I used a judgmental method to enable me to consider a Caribbean woman as a community activist. That is, I formulated a definition of community activist, to include any Caribbean woman who in five or more years acted as an volunteer-agent to mobilize against oppressions of race and gender. Someone, including myself, would have known of their community activism. From that standpoint it was easy to select the women about whose work I had known. Then using the snowballing procedure, I solicited referrals from some of the women who had agreed to be interviewed, and from others in the Caribbean/Black communities at large.

The main reason I chose women who are described as community activists, is that I wanted to study women who had resisted and survived. I was conscious of the variety and tremendous work that women in the diaspora in Canada did to hold organizations together, with scarce resources, and threats of job insecurity particularly for those who engaged in oppositional politics. Added to that I observed they appeared independent-minded enough to undertake responsibilities for ad hoc organizing in sites of racism in schooling, health and housing in Canada.6

Before 1968, 20% of the women who were residing in Canada could identify small beginnings of community work. In the seventies, there was an onset of social
movements like women's issues and anti-apartheid that generated increased consciousness and activity for many of these women to become involved wholeheartedly in community work continuously. Part of the reason I selected them from community organizations was because they belong to an area for which work is very much undervalued and unrecognized. Their community work also comprises a variety of activities in the cities of Toronto, Montreal and Kitchener-Waterloo. The multiple class positions, the diversity in race and sexual orientation, the difference in occupations altogether form a group that reflects first my own commitment to inclusiveness; and second, that deconstructs the monolithic structuring of identity either in race or class. My intentions notwithstanding, I respected Caribbean women's self-definitons.

Omissions in the sample. With respect to selecting women based on the composition of the geography of the Caribbean, I first proposed to include all the areas of the Anglophone Caribbean. However I was forced to abandon this idea, that meant the omission of some marginalized areas in scholarly works: St. Kitts, Nevis, and Belize to name but a few. I pursued a shortlist of names of women who originated from these areas, when I was unable to reach them, I stopped because the sample was then becoming too large, and I predicted that an increase might produce excessive repetition. I have also to recognize other omissions that would represent Caribbean women who had made an outstanding commitment to activism in Toronto. For example, there was Eva Smith, who passed away in 1993 at the outset of my research; and then there were those who work 'behind the scenes', one of whom I contacted was reluctant to tell her story. Her shyness perhaps suggest as well the risks Caribbean women take when they become political.
Data collection. The interviewing method is one of the components of qualitative research. Since I was focusing on subjectivity, interviewing as an instrument in the research design would prove to be the best method to capture the language that expresses feelings, and perceptions, and even to discern attitudes (Green-Powell 1997). I chose to interview women using the strategy of unstructured open-ended interviews to provide opportunities for narration and to avoid as much as possible creating a hierarchy between myself and the interviewee (Oakley 1981). I found I could easily carry out a conversation in a special style, because in general the women in my sample who considered themselves community activists showed a great degree of eagerness in telling their story about their activism. Oakley (1981) recommends the non-hierarchical relationship in interviewing that I employed because I belonged to this group of women, as I, myself, identified with the role of community activist and educator, and I was "prepared to invest" my "own personal identity in the relationship" (41). In other words, I knew that throughout the data collection my participation would not be passive. I would strike a balance between a certain level of objectivity that I must obtain and the woman bonding in rapport that can be somewhat difficult (Oakley 1981). I however, remained a willing listener without being intrusive but contemplative about how my presence was affecting the self-disclosures of Caribbean women in my sample. My attitude towards the interviewee's style of telling her stories, plus my home hospitality in some cases, I believe, was instrumental in the emergence of a spontaneous and direct reflection in the process in which their stories unfolded. In contrast, I found that when interviews were done at women's offices, there was never quite the same opportunity for elaboration and revelation of some parts of their stories (Finch 1984).
I also found that during each interview, the interviewee's desire to provide information and to look back, sometime nostalgically, shifted our relationship from conventions of interviewing that Oakley (1981) argues against to one of friendship. This transition to some level of emotional intimacy, varied from one subject to another, but a comfort zone emerged and some women felt comfortable enough to introduce themes centred around their personal lives. In my view, the sharing of information became profound whenever I reciprocated with relevant pieces of my story. I used this notion of reciprocity more or less when an interviewee was reluctant to engage in divulging some areas of self-reflection, the contribution I made in sharing my reality helped her to continue self-disclosure in a trusting way. Reciprocity also helped with memory and forgetting as it could be difficult at times for me, as researcher, to overtly question the veracity of facts, or probe the 'story behind the story'. My subjective knowledge of social relations both in the Caribbean and the diaspora enabled me feel comfortable eliciting the needed information. This manipulation of the technique of interviewing ensured my aim to have these women's voices validate their responses to domination, to remove themselves from levels of 'victim' to models of resistance. 13

Limitations of the interview. I came to this study looking for a reality in stories of Caribbean women in which I could determine how they like myself contradicted dominant ideas of Caribbean women as victims. Highly conscious of the experiences of race, class, gender and sexuality, I did not particularly want in this study to repeat an analysis of oppressions, that is prominent in the discourse of race and common to migrant women. I felt more the need to move quickly into a discovery of what generated an ability for my own self-empowerment. I never examined my own life history to uncover reasons why I
seemed to have a 'primordial' skill to reject subordination and to fashion my life independently, in spite of how experiences of family career and the female/male paradigm structured my identity. I always maintained my own private agenda. In this thesis, I wanted to know how this survival is socially produced.

I believe it was difficult for me to ask in-depth personal questions about conflicts or abuse in the lives of women in my sample when my own story rarely voices these elements. Like myself, women in my study stressed family values and ethnic pride, and while they did not totally exclude racism and sexism, they told stories that transcended these aspects of their lives. For example, when a Caribbean woman mentioned any notion of a mother-daughter conflict, I heard more of the mother's behaviour as an exemplar of resistance than of any demonstrations of abuse (Sacks 1989).14

The study depended on oral stories without reference to records of community organizations, or any other complementary methods of analytic induction, to verify data provided about women's activism. This is so because of the focus on subjectivity. However, this absence of organizational information restricted the study somewhat as I could not elaborate on the contexts in that these women had survived. Yet it leaves room for other studies to fill the gap between these researchees' stories and the diasporic experiences of community organizational development.

Finally, I consider as a minor disadvantage, the preponderance of voices of women who have had a university education to problematize its validity in theory. At the same time it makes generalizable the significance of education as a strategy for the marginalized, and in particular, Caribbean women. I did not intend it this way. Yet the findings show one of the strategies of resistance-education-has materialized in migration of Caribbean women.
Data analysis. Data analysis requires "the research to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) and to make convincing sense of it" (Green-Powell 1997:207). I came to this study to enquire how Caribbean women survived but it was not to prove the validity of a theory, nor to make some description of the ideas exposed. As a consequence I employed a grounded theory approach that is a qualitative research method for analyzing data. Grounded theory is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1967) as

one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon...One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (23).

This theory has some advantages that were useful in my research design. For example, the process of generating theory and collecting data is not linear but repetitive. The repetition is much inclined to provide for theory that has greater richness for conceptual development. Because I could make constant comparisons among my data from forty-six stories, and ask theoretically oriented questions, the grounded theory approach could more closely predict what was actually happening. I like the idea of grounded theory as it assisted me to make conscious choices of my varying quantities of data, because these amount to the substance from which theory would be generated. I was researching how subjectivity was constructed and I wanted to produce theory that was grounded in the empirical world where Caribbean women occupied subordinated positions.

How the interviews were analyzed. My analysis using the grounded theory approach began two to three days after the interview, as I listened to tapes and enhanced my notes, so that I could begin coding and discovering what theory was evolving. Strauss (1989) recommends three modes for grounded theory analysis—induction, deduction and
verification. The process of induction led me to discover certain insights about which I could assess how they were workable as general events in the lives of my participants. For example, the stories of childhood and family/community relationship that these women associated with their adult responses to oppression were significant in making me devise the notion of 'home'. In the process of deduction, because of my experience with that kind of data, I could arrive at a conclusion by reasoning from general premises to the particular. It was the means by which I chose to select certain events and use them as strategies for survival that I could verify. For instance, I could use my own knowledge of community activism in Canada along with the literature to discover the period and place where certain events took place to establish accuracy (Green-Powell 1997; Strauss 1989). Since I was studying construction of subjectivity as a phenomenon, the modes of the grounded theory approach enabled me, on the one hand, to examine ideas that were disclosed to see what was obscured, or what was actually meant. On the other hand, I was able to see the parallels in my own story to make reasonably appropriate interpretations. So during an interview, I asked a question or made a comment that evoked a reply in story form, to enable me to recognize the points of self-defining as women who were able to construct themselves as independent-minded. On listening to each tape after the interview, I coded what I heard to be themes that dominated the stories, (Strauss 1989) for example, childhood; community; immigration; oppressions; agency; independence; economics; and home. These themes that I organized with matching references, helped to capture the complexity that was weaving in their consciousness to identify them with activism and resistance. This information was used later to focus the full analysis and organize chapters. When I had collected all the transcripts, I set up another structure for the data, by
analyzing each transcript in the computer, and paragraphing quotes, giving each a "story line" (Strauss & Corbin 1990:116). Some of them were: Childhood roots, class and women's strength; Reasons for migrating; How a Caribbean women learnt community activism before migrating; How Caribbean women coped with family life and activism. Very many of these codes recurred in all the transcripts, though there were many that were specific to some and differentiated the data. Finally, while I sought to do as much interpretation to meet my academic requirement, I never let go of my commitment to let these Caribbean women's voices be heard.

**Personal risks.** My intention to explore multiple heritages poses some difficulty, because I cannot be free of my own subject position. I cannot pretend absolute objectivity and not explore the risks that involve me as a middle-class, African-Caribbean, heterosexual woman. There is the risk of being misunderstood as appropriating the cause of groups other than the one to which I am socially designated. But I experience the problem of living today in a dark skin, that cannot tell my biological history, and that I know may give me more than one choice as a marker of identity. As I discussed in earlier paragraphs, a part of the reason for my attempting to account for the risk I am taking, might be due to the construction of the continuum of whiteness through to blackness in Caribbean identity, and the complexities of the elements within. That is, values that essentialize identities in colonialism continue to be invested politically to establish boundaries either of race or class. The construction of the "we" as Gilroy (1997) puts it, constructs the 'other', and erases it. Yet if I accept the idea of interconnected histories I have to agree with overlapping boundaries and therefore conclude the risk involved is no more than that of a researcher to an interviewee. That is, I can feel myself eligible to view a Caribbean
identity, through more lenses than one, particularly if I ignore the essentialism of race. It is not as though in my work there will be an appropriation of the 'other' in Said's (1978) sense of the term. Instead, my work brings empowerment to otherwise erased voices in the same context. Added to that, if I stay within feminist perspectives of theorizing as I want to do, then my work would provide new ways at looking at the world, so as to interpret and understand women's experience of diverse oppressions from a variety of sites.

In addition to the risk of appropriation is one of not understanding or stereotyping Caribbean women of ethnicities other than my own. I was conscious that I may be viewed as an outsider who could indulge in stereotyping or not understanding the 'other'. I spent some time asking myself what my assumptions were about Indian, Chinese or very light-skinned women. Or, sometimes I had to question myself about the assumptions I held about those women who classify themselves as poor or working class. I know that I could have learnt dominant values of reading class and ethnicity. How would that affect my research? Would I read the categories associated with other Caribbean women's identities the way I feel other have always read me? I knew that to be conscious about subjectivity is to be conscious of attitudes inherited.

Disadvantages in the study. This study has not been able to analyze the gender issues within the dynamics of community organizing, nor to examine how these women acted in organizations. This work could not expose any aspects of organizational management in which could have described their leadership roles, like other studies did for the region. I refer to Honor Ford-Smith's (1989) Ring Ding in a Tight Corner published here in Canada, where one could find both an examination of the tensions in feminist communist
organizing, and recommendations, that other feminist organizations could use, to protect their ability to exist.

Next it does not include women born here of Caribbean parents found in Yon (1995), an ethnographic study of Caribbean youth identity, that raises questions of ambivalence among this sample about a diasporic identity and roots, black and white. This study recognizes this as another dimension for identity politics, that would have conflict with its own sample of women, who have experienced first hand the complexities of the Caribbean culture and the striving to adjust and settle in the Canadian culture.

While I myself am conscious of the intensive discourse on racism that has had a pervasive influence on the lives of Caribbean women, particularly in the diaspora, and that for one moment cannot be ignored, I directed my research to go beyond an analysis of issues of racism like Essed's (1990) to determine how the self survives, within the bombardment of race. While the study will explore strategies such as education for empowerment and survival in Caribbean women's lives, it will not measure the experiences women have had in attaining educational goals, in order to adhere to the relevance in the inquiry, How did women survive?

**Advantages of this study.** The main advantage of this study is that it is original in studying radical subjectivity of Anglophone Caribbean women in Canada. It examines how these women survived in Canada, through an analysis of their subjective experiences. Intending to explore identity through the subjective experiences of Caribbean women, this study does not have a set of theories and assumptions about a Caribbean woman's identity that needed to be tested. The commonalities and differences that appear in the collective data from women's stories have been interpreted and named because of repetition. I was
looking for 'independence' that I found mentioned in all the stories. While independence is a conceived as characteristic of behaviour among African women in Caribbean male and female literature, it is less frequently associated with Indian Caribbean women, both in scholarly works and popularly, than for African Caribbean women and is not known for women of other heritages. My study discusses it as an ethic used by all the Caribbean women of this diverse group irrespective of race and class.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues Black women's theorizing about survival in literature and the blues includes a journey in which acts of freeing the mind of "internalized oppressions" ought to be undertaken. For her, the importance of self-definition is in finding the self in "context of family and community" in that journey which changes the negative images, such as victim, to those of self-reliance and independence. Getting rid of images that distort an African American woman's identity, for Collins, is a mark of Black women's empowerment (104-107). This study endorses the idea that self-definitions enable marginalized women to confirm the multiplicity of positions in which a woman can empower and value herself (Andalzúa 1990:xxv; Collins 1990:107). As Gayatri Spivak (1990) writes, "there are many subject positions that one must inhabit, one is just not one thing" (60) that is clearly evident in the self-definitions in this sample. For me, this form of women defining themselves in this study also constructs Caribbean women's subjectivities as positive while it problematizes the stereotypes of, 'victim' in the image of dependent immigrant; 'strong' in that of the black, aggressive, hard worker; and in 'women who do not know what they want'. Empowerment manifests itself in the respect and value she gives to herself for her survival in constructing her gender, her nationality; and her spirituality.
I bring to this study is my own commonsense understanding of a Caribbean society, and my knowledge and experience of it, as well as the diaspora in Canada, that includes my own story of survival. I feel empowered to do so because this work could make some contribution to a continuum in the discourse on racism, with respect to Canada's immigration policies and Caribbean women. This is the main theme in Agnes Calliste's (1989) detailed study, *Canada's Immigration Policy and Domestics from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme*. Her examination of the conditions under that Caribbean women accepted positions as domestics, when many were overqualified leaves room for the question, How did they survive? to which my work and particularly my story responds. Caribbean women in the diaspora that is inclusive of their voices emerging from a diversity of race, class and sexuality. These voices do not authenticate any existing theories, but themselves in multiple identities generate theories through their responses to hegemonic struggles.

Of secondary advantage is the study introduces a construct for research Anglophone Caribbean women in the diaspora that includes their voices emerging from a diversity of race, class and sexuality. As much as my research enables me to tell, it is the first of its kind to attempt to deconstruct the uniracial-"Black", "African", "Indian"-identity of Caribbean women through making connections in the histories of these women and giving voice to their subjective experiences.

**The study's similarities and differences from others.** My study is related in theory to that of Christine Ho (1991) in *Salt-water Trinities*, because it challenges the assumptions that the migration process results in assimilation. While my study deconstructs the social construction of the female migrant identity to explore a Caribbean woman's subjectivity,
Christine Ho, utilizes a "social network analysis" to gain experience of the relationships of her sample of Afro-Trinidadians in the contexts of the marital, kin and friendship structures. Her work theorises networking at multiple levels as integral to maintaining an identity that is bounded by family and friendship linkages. Her sample of men and women had similar motives for migrating as the women in my own. Ho isolated these categories "kinship; social mobility; and seeking adventure" (59) In this study, while many of the women migrated independently, some came with parents or joined other relatives here; and very few thought of migration as some form of adventure. Also, many of the women regarded education as a primary motive for migration, that in Ho's analysis is an integral part of social mobility. While I contextualized my research in community organizing, and found it could be categorized as a resistance tool, one of Ho's (1991) findings is that "voluntary associations" did not play a critical role in the lives of her sample. Her participants revealed that organizations were established only for social and cultural reasons, and subject to desertion and early demise (157-159).

However, like Amina Mama's (1995) my work researches subjectivity, that she defines as a concept that creates multiple layers in an individual's mind. Over time, layers are repressed and replaced with new material so that constant layering or breaking off of material can provoke feelings of anxiety and uneasiness. She uses both historical and theoretical material to theorize subjectivity as being constituted out of a collective experience. (89). She writes

Subjectivity is not only dynamically formed but also continually changing and being constituted and reconstituted from one instant to another, as well as over longer periods of time (129).
Mama investigates the stories of Black women in England of the time, and uses discourse as a tool to investigate subjectivity as I discussed in Chapter II. Her work differs from mine because in spite of, diverse combinations of heritages in her subjects—African/Caribbean/European and African/European—these women are treated as a homogeneous group, Black. She ignores the fact of the interconnectedness of Caribbean women's histories that could influence that construct (Bariteau 1995). Her totalizing a black subjectivity in a group of British women of mixed heritages, prevents them from making their liberator claim to 'Black' and to politicize themselves. My study does have also a similarity with Philomena Essed’s (1990)21 that is, as researchers we can identify ourselves as insiders because we have similar cultural backgrounds as those of the researched. Also in both studies we admit women's voices to articulate and thus authenticate theories we have produced.

Profiles in self-definitions. I want to introduce my sample with the self-definitions of these women, that were their responses when I asked, how they would like to list themselves, if possible, on a census form. These women responded confidently about their heritages (see Appendix I). Then with equal conviction some were even verbose, while a few were shy, yet in common they spoke of themselves as women with self-reliance and courage. They had no fear to make a political commitment to social change, nor to recognize their bonds to the Caribbean and in particular their countries of origin as well as to articulate their loyalties to Canada. Ideas of who they are percolated through many dimensions to include nationalism, political activism, feminism, but most of all Caribbean daughters of the legacy of resistance. I have included a heritage description chart in Appendix I; and the complete self-definitions in Appendix II. The words below are a sample that reflect the
words of the poet Grace Nichols, at the introduction to Chapter III. These Caribbean women in my sample expressed their sense of Caribbean-ness, 'home', as bringing to them ideas of culture, roots and community:

Annzinga: "African; European; Portuguese. Definitely I would say I am a Black woman, I am a Caribbean woman, very much a Black woman from Trinidad, that's who I am—that's where my roots, my culture, my outlook whatever...I have not found anything in Canadian culture that would make me give up Trinidadian culture."

Nisa: "African; European; Mixed Race. I am all-Jamaican!"

Rowena: "European; Mixed race; East Indian; African; Syrian-Lebanese; Amerindian. I never identify myself first by my sexual orientation. My focal identity is a Caribbean woman. I am a Mixed race, middle class woman."

Usha: "East Indian. I know who I am, I am not African, I am not Chinese, and I am not English. I know where my roots are, so I know I would not like to go to India and marry an Indian man! I am a Caribbean woman. What is a Caribbean woman? She is a pepper-pot, and I still got quite a lot of pepper in me too."

Yaa: "African. I see myself as an African-Caribbean woman, coming from a strong line of Black woman. I don't see myself as the "I"--"me"--"Yaa"! I see my myself very much connected to community."

ENDNOTES


3. In a later Chapter VIII, I have Chinese women speak about the insistence of White Canadians who tell them they are not Caribbean.

4. According to Calliste (1989) the Domestic Scheme was activated in 1952 when both immigration policies were liberalized to include Caribbean people of "exceptional merit" and it was difficult to reject Caribbean domestic worker, on the grounds that there was an insatiable need for that form of labour in Canada. Canada's immigration policy and domestics from the Caribbean: the Second Domestic Scheme. In Jesse Vorst et al. Race, class, gender: Bonds and Barriers, Manitoba: Society for Socialist Studies. (pp. 133-165).
5. Their descriptions of these categories which were part of their stories enabled me to define them as follows:

**Middle class:** professional and white collar jobs; estate management; retail business

**Lower middle class:** small business-retail shops, boarding house, skilled labour occupations; public service; defence service

**Poor:** self-employed in domestic, industrial, and agricultural and other semi-skilled trades.

6. Many of the women I met at community meetings late at night, for instance, brought their children with them. Others of them, who had job positions and skills, worked from their offices after hours writing proposals, or producing communication materials on behalf of the community organizations to which they are attached. A few of them loaned money to an organization to keep it alive.


8. I refer, for example, to one of the founding members in 1962, of the Jamaica Canadian Association, a impressive social/cultural service organization, who is still active in this community organization, yet who perhaps for the first time in 1996 received recognition by the Association, the event appeared in the ethnic press. [check my press files]


11. Some of the interviewees in Ontario had previously been infrequently been community co-workers with me, or seminar participants in workshops which I had conducted. I had shared my intention to research issues of Caribbean women’s identity in community organizing.

12. 'It's great to have someone to talk to': the Ethics and politics of interviewing women. In Colin Bell and Helen Roberts (Eds.) *Social researching: Politics, problems, practice,* (pp. 70-87). London. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.


14. This study found that organizing in resistance to work-related denigration, was consistent for 'black workers' who had negative experiences in families, which some described as parental abuse, but which was instrumental in teaching them the values of adulthood and responsibility; and which they transferred to their unionization efforts. Their


16. The linear process means collecting data as a discrete chunk of the work which happens before coding and analysis as explained by Lynne Brenegan and Esther Ewing (1995), notes of a presentation on Grounded Theory Research. OISE/UT.

17. Anne Opie (1992) discusses Said's (1978) definition of "appropriation of the 'other'" to mean the colonizer's interpretation of the experiences of the colonized to "sustain a particular representation of view of the 'other' as part of an ideological stance". Qualitative research, appropriation of the 'other' and empowerment. *Feminist Review 40.* Spring. (pp. 53-54).

18. The ambivalence about independence by male writers which characterised the identity of Caribbean woman of African descent in Jamaican literature was typical of the "educated opinion" of the society in the early twentieth century, according to Rhonda Cobham's (1990) article *Women in Jamaica Literature, 1900-1950.* In Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Eds.), *Out of KUMBLA* (pp.195-222). Trenton, NJ.:Africa World Press.

19. In Chapter III, I explore Caribbean women's writings in which Ramabai Espinet's story *Barred: Trinidad 1987* appears and represents one of the few which speaks to agency in Indian Caribbean women's response to subordination.


CHAPTER V

IMAGINING HOME

*Home full o’ ankala...*

The rewriting of home becomes a critical link in the articulation of identity. It is a play of resistance to domination which identifies where we come from, but also locates home in its many transgressive and disjunctive experiences (Boyce Davies 1994:115).

In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which home has to be imagined by Caribbean women in Canada so that they can survive. I first examine Boyce Davies’ 1994 theory, that is used in particular to examine Black women’s writings transnationally for the definition and redefinition of identity in migration. I link her discussion with the ways women in this study imagine home. To contextualize the stories, I explore some Caribbean theories of home that help to define it. Finally I theorize how certain features of rootlessness, fragmentation, and stratification can be traced historically in the idea of ‘home’, to become part of the process of a collective subjectivity.

Carole Boyce Davies (1994) quoted above, theorizes about the connections between identity and home by exploring the writings of Afro-Caribbean/American women in the US that include Paule Marshall, Audre Lorde, Jamaica Kincaid and Michelle Cliff. She argues in *Writing home*, that these Caribbean authors re-imagine the Caribbean in ways that enable them to survive. Boyce Davies further argues, that ‘home’ is full of contradictions and contestations so that very often some Caribbean women, for example,
lesbians or light skinned women, do not experience full belonging to home. Nonetheless, home is "where we come from" and it is a "critical link in the articulation of identity" (115). She writes that,

the question of identity for Afro-Caribbean/American women writers involves a self-definition which takes into account the multifaceted nature of human existence and of female identity (115).

This task of self-definition also requires the authors to work out cultural and sexual politics. The writers that Boyce Davies discusses work these politics out by making historical links to Africa and by engaging in "an anti-hegemonic discourse with the United States" (115). When these authors imagine home, it becomes a way for them to articulate a variety of identities or "migrations between identities" (116). That is to say, they write about shifting identities from the Caribbean to the United States, or from female to Black, or from African heritage to western values, and so on. In other words, home is remembered in ways that enable women to develop new identities in a foreign, hostile land. The process of identity requires a certain remembering that is multifaceted. It makes it possible for Caribbean women to struggle with imperialism and patriarchy both in the Caribbean and in North America. This is key to my argument that remembering 'home' in these multifaceted ways is a memory of resistance and survival.

Boyce Davies (1994) finds that home was rewritten by the Caribbean authors in America in several ways. Their writings reclaimed an identity or reconnected to it by exploring family history. For example, the writings have romanticized 'home' by naming it as a space in a rural area where grandmothers live and pass on wisdom. When home is described negatively it is remembered as a colonized land.
Boyce Davies (1994) asserts home is constructed in multiple locations. She points to bell hooks' (1990) reminder that

the very meaning of home changes with experience of decolonization and of radicalization. At times 'home' is nowhere. At times one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place (Quoted in Boyce Davies (1996): 49).

Boyce Davies says that in the diaspora, home is an elusive site where Black women have to deal with the totalizing discourse of Pan African/Black nationalism and sexism. The stories of Caribbean-Canadian women in my study rely on similar meanings of home although my subjects do not imagine a connection to a historical African identity as Boyce Davies suggests Caribbean-American women writers do. It is important to note that my subjects comprise a racially diverse group, with multiple stories of origin. The shifts in identity with migration that Boyce Davies sees in Caribbean American authors, are not so much in evidence in my sample. Rather, the women in this study see themselves as having learnt to have the sense of self at home. For instance, those who struggled in Canada with either racial or lesbian identities, associated the struggle with the exercises in resistance they had acquired in learning to survive at home. Boyce Davies does note, however, that home is a place of strengths for Caribbean American writers. She refers to Audre Lorde's (1984) essay, Grenada revisited, where Lorde validates her own heritage/identity through praise of the resilience of Grenadian people. In other words, the presence of strengths that seems new to Audre Lorde and which she captures in her work has been confirmed and valorized among Caribbean-Canadian women in my study. They know well that the Caribbean is a place where many women and men can empower themselves. They claim that these very people were responsible for their learning to survive, and that this socialization process is retained in their memories.
As a diverse group, the Caribbean women in my study, consider that they learnt about resistance to multiple oppressions at home. (I will demonstrate the process of resistance later in Chapter VI.) When I argue about home as a site, unlike some other concepts I do not mean it is a fixed place, it is a structure that is mobile like a tent: it can be constructed anywhere. My idea responds to Boyce Davies' (1994) notion of her "mother's journeys" (explained in later paragraphs) that "redefine space" (1). In other words, home surrounds these Caribbean women's lives so that oppressive experiences do not shock them in Canada. They believe they will find a variety of solutions to combat a whole range of oppressions. Roberta, who tells her story of experiences of poverty and racial discrimination in her childhood, relates to her period of adjustment in Canada like this,

I think my transition into Canadian life and racism, was maybe facilitated because I had already dealt with those kinds of disparagement at home (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

The stories in my sample make the connection with the colonial ills of home. As Boyce Davies' (1994) authors do, they link these ills to negative issues in Canada, and this resonance validates their memories. I say this because this group of Caribbean women repeatedly made claims, each with different stories of having relied on a range of mixed experiences in their backgrounds to survive. All have seen the attempts by older Caribbean women to resolve problems of domination and subordination. Some have not agreed with the resolutions, yet the processes of resistance remain firmly on all of their minds. As a result this imagined home as a part of their subjectivity, helps them to re-define their identities in other geographical spaces. What then creates my notion of home? Will Caribbean theories help me to understand this 'home'?
Caribbean theories: Caribbean women in my study, it would seem, have no need to interrogate the protection of 'home'. They know its weaknesses, and they can leave it while respecting it for strengths they derive from it, as Kamla tells us:

My mother instilled in us values, principles that she followed. As a result, I feel strongly about that. I was raised in an environment where you don't get things the easy way. I've seen the struggle which she went through, and I have seen how she died because of the struggles she went through. So I feel all those reasons made me a superstrong person—I will not fail her, no matter what, I will not fail her. Really that's why I ended up here (Interview no. 38. 5 September 1995).

Thus when Caribbean feminist scholars address the notion of home, they try to reflect its complexities, either by a fundamental theory that defines it as an educative source (López-Springfield 1997), or by problematizing the concept the way it is reflected in Black women's writing (Boyce Davies 1994). López Springfield (1997), addresses this issue very briefly in talking back to a Caribbean male view of home in an Introduction to her edited work, Daughters of Caliban. First she confirms that home as a site of "contacts and crossings" has been largely ignored in attempts to address issues of identity in the Caribbean in male academic discourse. Moreover, any discourse in which home may have been barely featured has tended to copy models of analysis that are patriarchal and colonialist. In which case, home is regarded as a private realm. But López Springfield counters "to Caribbean women home is a site of communal wisdom or a place of sexual oppression" (xiii). She sees this idea in feminist migrant writings home is captured as showing strengths and contradictions that prevail in a Caribbean culture of home and family. Her idea of a "site of communal wisdom" resonates in my notion of home as 'a site of learning resistance'. However, in my data stories of sexual oppression are few because of the significant attention many of the women in the sample paid to resistance. They seem
to take for granted that home is not always safe for them as women. Some mentioned briefly a range of experiences that include domestic violence, and race discrimination, that occurred along with affection and nurturing. Yet home remains in their minds as a site of where they learned how to resist. This home is as an imagined construct that enables them to survive. Their stories constitute a tale of resistance. Nevertheless, there appears to be a penchant on the part of these Caribbean women in the sample to suppress the negative, and perhaps romanticize their full experience. They talk about mixed experiences of love and caring, communal sharing, sexism, violence, and economic deprivation. Also they mention a tenacious claim to nation. All this does not prevent them from constructing home as an empowering space: one space in learning survival. This is the lesson these women retained. These memories confirm for us as Caribbean women, 'home' is to be remembered as a contradictory site.

Defining "home" in the Caribbean region. Home, the Caribbean way, is best described by Nancie L. Solien, anthropologist, whose work has focused on the family in Latin America and the Caribbean. Home is, she notes,

- a group of people bound together by that complex set of relationships known as kinship ties, between at least two of whom there exists a conjugal relationship (1986:106).4

In her work, Christine Barrow (1996) has substantiated this definition. She notes that the reality of the Caribbean family is often the relations with various members of an extended family and community.5 The interactions of this grouping culminate in 'family' as multifaceted and shifting, produced historically from the complexities of forced migrations to so-called independent nationhoods within the Anglophone Caribbean. As a result, 'family' is located in no fixed home but in many homes both in the Caribbean and other
parts of the world. It thus includes very many people inter-generationally across a variety of geographical spaces. Caribbean women in this study remember home as a geographically dispersed place and as community. For example, this dialogue between Amanda and myself indicates how some women see home:

Y: Amanda, please talk to me about your childhood background?
A: I was born in Trinidad, and lived in Pointe-a-Pierre, the oilfield camp for awhile, then lived in Tunapuna, and then in New York for a year. I grew up in San Fernando and went to Naparima High School. In Tunapuna, I was adopted by the neighbourhood.
Y: How would you describe people in your neighbourhood?
A: Mostly Black, Indians and a few Whites, but more Black mixtures. My grandmother, my aunt and my mother lived each in one of three houses in a row in the district. If we did anything my mother would know about it before we got home from school (Interview no. 44. 11 February 1996).

This extract of her story, even though she was hesitant throughout to give "family" details, demonstrates the multiple subject positions she holds, because she was influenced by disparate adult perceptions in different class positions. I am able to make an analysis of this because of my own knowledge of the social terrain of her country, Trinidad and Tobago. For Amanda, home consists of a range of experiences that occurred from Pointe-a-Pierre (a space where race differentiation, privilege of whiteness and degrees of individualism exist) to Tunapuna (a mixed environment of different heritages and middle-class to working-class occupations, with a proclivity to communal sharing).

Currently, Caribbean scholarship, according to Barrow (1996), indicates that complex family systems existed in ancestral countries, referring mainly to Africa and India. Through forced migration of slavery and indentureship that created horrible conditions for residential and everyday living, these systems were modified. Still they never lose some of the essential complex qualities of community (Barrow 1986; Brodber 1986; Odie-Ali 1986; Powell 1986). For example, Brodber (1986) found African women-
centred households in her study in Jamaica that admitted children other than those with biological ties and treated them alike. Added to that, 75% of the women in Brodber's study "took residential partners legally or in concubinage" without disrupting the household (23). Barrow (1996) asserts that Indians, until the 1960's, retained the predominant custom of extremely close and interdependent households. The contiguous interaction between members of a family group is preserved in separate households.

According to Barrow (1996) the established norms of family systems in the Caribbean have been transformed by the heightened impact of social and economic influences that mainly introduced "socio-economic circumstances of unemployment and poverty" (352). In Indian households there is an apparent abandonment of elderly parents, and there has been much less adherence to arranged marriages, along with a reduced desire for large numbers of children, especially sons (349). Turning to my sample I find the strength of family patterns for Caribbean women in Canada, have to be reconstructed. As Aita emotionally says,

...like everybody who leaves that support system that they have home and does what is called migration, which is a real rupturing of your identity, of everything that is familiar to you, because it turns your world upside down. Coming to a place like this...

Fortunately some of them can transplant the strengths of home here. Mabel relates the memory of her first days in Canada in the sixties:

I find that there was a sense of community, people pulled together more at that time, like now people talk about privacy-we didn't think that we had no privacy. In the Caribbean, the concept of privacy is different. Even now I wonder, how could three families live in a house and get along! There may have been one washroom! There was definite sharing by scheduling work time. My uncle would work nights, another one in the family would work days, for example. So there was always an older relative to look after the children and that's how your culture is inculcated (Interview no. 33. 23 August 1995).
Christine Ho's works (1991; 1993) demonstrate how diasporic subjects reproduce this wide notion of home. In each of her studies, Ho sees her Caribbean subjects recycling the family system transnationally. The practices include the dependency for 'minding' children within a complex of mainly female networks. Having found that the majority of her sample internationalizes the family and rejects assimilation of North America, she concludes,

that the preservation of these ties with their social intimates in the West Indies and other cities in North, implies personal acts of choice on the part of the sample members--first in the selection of particular kin and friends with whom they wish to pursue relations, and second, in the concerted effort required to sustain these connections across time and geography. It seems to me unlikely that they would go to the trouble of retaining these elaborate, far-flung networks merely for the sake of fellowship (1991:179).

In my opinion, this assertion implies resistance to adopting North American styles of individualism. They can also resist oppressions, like alienation which comes from persistent racialization of groups of Caribbean peoples. The practices of internationalization of the Caribbean family sustain the human need to bond, as Ho's studies show.

Ho (1991; 1993) also reminds us that a custom of the extended family system can include racial and ethnic plurality among families, friends and neighbours. This system persists in spite of any kind of modernized equipment and possible influences of westernized family practices. It comprises extended families, who form co-residential units at times and spread to transnational networks within the Caribbean or in metropolitan countries. In this Caribbean family system, the model of nuclear family unit is present as a sector of the wider extended family group, and is hardly ever on its own. This extended family defines home according to circumstance and need. I hope that the foregoing
theoretical notions of home serves to emphasize the magnitude of the argument that Caribbean-Canadian brought home with them.

These are Caribbean women who imagine themselves belonging to samples of the entire grouping described above. They, from time to time, have experiences of the support and security it offers, as Abena says

I grew up in a community where everyone knew everybody else's business and it was like a grand family. If your mother is going to the market, then she could pass you over the fence to a neighbour and so on (Interview no. 29. 11 July 1995).

In spite of experiencing the level of displacement that the memory of home brings (Boyce Davies 1994), Caribbean women in my study remember home with a sense of belonging to their family groups. This belonging overrides any patriarchal nature of gender relations, or any power manipulation among women. They could recall rules of sexual propriety, as being home, where parents experiencing their own dynamics, did not impart knowledge about gender relations, yet kept them in strict discipline,

you essentially came from school and sat and read and went out to meet friends somewhere else. It was a kind of schizophrenia arrangement, quite frankly. I wasn't allowed to even go to parties or any place which would cause my parents to worry about (Interview no. 19. 8 June 1995).

This home is only a part of the concept, as Caribbean women refer to the nation also as home. In so doing, they romanticize their belonging to the nation with a desire to return to this home, as Alice relates,

It now occurs to me, I haven't taken out my Canadian citizenship, which is interesting after twenty years, you know, I have yet to become a Canadian citizen! I used to think, I would never, you know, become a Canadian. I wanted to go back home and finally become a part of the government and as I got older those things have changed (Interview no. 30. 8 August 1995).

Another example of a tenacious claim to home is when Aita remarks,
The problem of drugs was now coming on the scene in Trinidad when I left. I took a course in Drug Addiction Counselling, you see. I thought it was perfect to have this with which to go back home (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

This world of home, that Caribbean women in my study imagine for themselves, includes both the private sphere, where they were socialized to resist; and a public where they imagine themselves, among other things, fighting national degradation. It is a world, operating in an accordion-like manner in their minds, that socially produced them through a mixture of accommodation and rejection of dominance. They think of home as a personal connection to family and friends in one breath, and in another, it is their community/nation where their contributions may count. In addition to the private and public connections, they retain a romantic idea of cultural integration. Culinary tastes and the rhythm of music are endemic in this vision of home. As Sastra says

I recall listening to music with Jeremee, who is from Tobago, and we get so excited about music coming out of the Caribbean—he an African and I an Indian—and we both say that it is only from the Caribbean you can get that type of music because it is the only place with a rich mixture of people. That is the exciting part of being from the Caribbean, and that is why I will never give up that identity (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).

My picture of a Caribbean home sees the subject, Caribbean woman less as a victim of social constructions of gender exclusions, and more as a participant of a evolutionary system where she can locate herself in several cultural and geographical spaces. Caribbean women in my study can do this, because they remember home as a site where multiple identities are constructed especially for women to resist oppressions. Thus, their ideas of belonging to home are real, in spite of the contradictory experiences that might tend to displace them as women. For instance, Black women writing about home, can inform us of the experiences of migration and exile, that might support ideas of not
belonging (Boyce Davies 1994). Yet home helps them in redefining identity, and, in giving us a sense, in the way Spivak (1993) puts it, of the "things without which we cannot live" (4). When I write of home as a site of learning resistance, I mean learning how to depend on things/ideas that enable an individual Caribbean woman to confront the burden of life challenges. When some Caribbean women, having acquired that learning, are in the diaspora, they can resist with their learning from home, victimhood in all its new faces.

This complex description to make home a site of learning around domination/subordination and the responses of resistance needs to interrogated. I examine the features that I believe configure home by exploring those commonly used to depict a Caribbean society. They are rootlessness; fragmentation; and stratification (Nettleford 1977; Thorpe 1975; Brathwaite 1974; Gouveia 1970). First there is rootlessness, that results from deracination of the Aboriginals of the Caribbean and other peoples whose origins are in Africa, Asia and Europe. At the same time, according to Caribbean political economist, Lloyd Best (1985) there has been the formation of a Caribbean by multiple plantocracies that guaranteed fragmentation because of the many "cleavages and contradictions" in imperialism (135-138). As a consequence, social and gendered systems emerge out of shifting and sometimes untidy economic systems that survive mainly because of external dependency. This fragmenting of the Caribbean society creates a 'catch-as-catch-can' system, experienced by the masses, and most likely influences the next feature: stratification. The latter emerges from these fragmented social and economic imperialist systems that construct Caribbean societies in race, class and gender. Stratification by establishing hierarchies of colour and achievement can create common and diverse ideas of home. Altogether these features of rootlessness, fragmentation, and stratification; shape
a particular Caribbean historical identity embedded in home. They will serve as a frame for my interpretation of the stories in my sample that tell of experiences of learning from that site.

**Home is always shifting: Rootlessness.** Rootlessness is a concept used in critical writings on Caribbean society that examine the geographic mobility documented in historical records. The concept refers to the movements and maronage of the Aboriginal population, the enslaved Africans and to a lesser extent the indentured Asians. Typical of this rootlessness is the resistance of the Caribs to the intrusion of their lands, and the alliances they made with Africans who had run away to foster new communities outside of the plantations (Craton 1986). Other examples depict rootlessness, as caused by the constant attack by whites, when Africans migrated to maroon communities (Higman 1984). I suggest the masses terrorised for their labour and inferiorized for their cultures would avoid permanence, that is, putting down roots. People could not make efforts to standardize home in modern terms, given the instability of plantation life that was frequently disrupted by cruel whims of plantation owners and hence revolts. Fleeing remained the motive of many people either within one island or between the islands and North, Central and South America during periods of colonial domination. Their homes became an opposition in many cases to the imposing "white" house that signified the White elite on plantations.

The instability of homes for the majority of non-white and poor White Caribbean peoples, would also be sustained by the possibility of return to their countries of origins. For example, historians have noted that many of the enslaved Africans hoped for a return to their native lands (Higman 1984; Gouveia 1965). As well, in the case of indentured
Asians, reports of repatriation were quite substantial (Look Lai 1993; Ramesar 1996). While the plantation economies benefitted the White elite and stabilised their colonial strongholds (Beckles 1989; Williams 1970), there was no comparative and substantive economy to enlist the loyalty of the enslaved or even the indentured (Bush 1990; Higman 1988; Williams 1970). Rather there were colonial efforts to reproduce cheap labour, by establishing packages for repatriation or settlement to the emancipated Africans and the freed Indians and Chinese. These efforts were resisted up to the early twentieth century (Mangru 1996; Look Lai 1993; Schuler 1980). Evidence of rootlessness can be seen in the back-to-Africa, back-to-India movements which are mapped into the history of colonialism (Augier et al 1960).

The continuous experience of the Caribbean region's external economic dependency results in Caribbean women's marginalization into huge pockets of poverty and produces patterns of migration. This condition is depicted in Caribbean women's imaginative writings, which I discussed in Chapter III. Female characters in Powell's (1993) and Riley's (1987) are mothers in the diaspora who are displaced because of underemployment. These stories replicate actual narratives of women from the Caribbean who leave for low paid jobs in North America and England, hoping to establish roots, yet not certain that they will, as they return "barrels" and remittances to grandmothers and communities of relatives.

**Rootlessness** is the resistance to historically produced social and economic oppressions of colonialism, which unsettle who were victimized and marginalized. Home has become a form of transience and a series of networks. I recall my earlier point about Carole Boyce Davies' (1994) brilliant example of her "mother's journeys" and the spaces
they redefine (1). That is, her mother lives in the Caribbean, and in different parts of the United States where she locates herself among communities of children, relatives and friends. Everywhere Carole's mother goes, she converts socially and culturally into home, vigorously commending or criticising the social politics of each place as applicable (2). This story exemplifies my point that Caribbean women Canada can bring home with them. It is not a fixed place, but rather a place which can be fixed to become home.

**Home is formed in small pieces: Fragmentation.** If we consider that rootlessness has taken Caribbean peoples into different spaces, to recreate modified patterns in new environments, then we are likely to understand constructions of Caribbean subjectivities through multiple fragments. Caribbean scholars argue that fragmentation means the many political, economic, and cultural elements that have been and are in co-existence and which have never made a whole society in the western sense (Brathwaite 1974; Best 1970). As Best (1970) stresses the Caribbean society has never been homogeneous. It has been constructed in fragments. There is no appropriate idea of a sole image of contemporary economy, within the numerous economic patterns emerging from systems in the plantation society.¹³ No one had capital but the minority elite, hence the masses, faced with diverse economic disparities, took various routes to use their skills to survive. In addition, he argues, there was a society formation based on racial mixing of the enslaved with White planters and estate owners; missionaries; and many other different groups who had a variety of skills, yet we cannot assume there was a "united interest" (137). Looking at the social and cultural backgrounds as well, Brathwaite (1974) argues the society is heterogeneous, because it has been constructed on fragments of ethnicity, colour, demographic differences, religions, and specialized interests. All these items are creating
and using skills to survive. Hence it is difficult to have a majority of people to readily accept any fully recognized leadership, in the tradition of a western society.¹⁴

These arguments bring some validity to the idea that home as a concept is opposed to conventional ideologies that construct 'family' as homogeneous (Barrow 1996). The idea of existing fragments as foundations for social and racial divisions in the lives of Caribbean women can be seen as regulating subjectivities, as my story illustrates:

I remember in the fifties, I felt heady about dipping in and out of cultures. Exciting things always used to happen at different times in my area of Belmont. I can recall the Da Silvas (Portuguese) who would be celebrating 'something'-they would ask us in for Madeira wine and garlic pork. Then George Lee (Chinese) our shopkeeper, would invite us to his restaurant for a feast on Double-Ten, that was special, because it fell on my Mama's birthday. Very exciting for me, was the home of the Barradas' (Spanish), from which the oldest daughter use to emerge in the guise of Carmen Miranda.¹⁵ I can still see now her bright coloured headties, her narrow waist and broad hips, which held a fascination for me as a teenager. I wanted to emulate her. I sighed over the romance story of the Swedish nun and the African priest. Both left their respective religious confinements, got married, and lived on the main road where passers by could see the beauty of their garden—the evidence of their relationship. Sometimes I felt I could hardly wait for the Hosay festival when I would hear the tassa drumming in the not too distant hills. Of course, I was intrigued with the idea that the gods would come to the entrance of our house, where the Indian men had left a food offering, and I kept looking every day at the large heap of rice gradually disappearing. It seems as though no sooner I had lost interest in that, I would hear the loud, repeated rhythms on pan, which was indigenous to Trinidad. It was some fun to decipher tunes they were playing, the artform was so new! Then it was the ringing of the bells as rituals began at dusk in the African Piggotts' yard with the intermittent bawling of goats as they made their sacrifices. The neighbours used to say they practised "obeah" secretly, and they belonged to the Shango religion. That was Belle Eau Road, Belmont for me, and it used to be my home for many of my impressionable years.

As I look back, these stories form a large part of my image of home--the surroundings which socialized me. This is the community of social and cultural fragments which live in my mind. There was no one culture nor class. As discursive
practices of race and class/labour differentiate these people, they were able to be identified as subgroups, each of which experienced a fragment of the other. Consequently, I can reflect on the race, class and gender boundaries among all these neighbours which made full cultural integration to a whole impossible. For, how much did we know of each other? At the time, I knew little of the histories of the various people in the community, and they knew the same about me. Yet it is hard for me up to now, not to experience a sense of belonging and a consciousness of being influenced by a culturally diverse neighbourhood that I call home. Despite the obvious race, class and cultural differences among people of Belle Eau Road, constituted by imperialism there was also a presence of commonality. For instance, any distancing because of class positions among them seemed to be juxtaposed generally with the collective enthusiasm for celebration, and collective resistance to colonialism.

Marise, of Portuguese, African and Chinese backgrounds, provides another example in her story to explain her experience of fragments, when she says,

"I think first of all the major cultural influences as a child in Guyana that had meaning for me, divided in positive and negative. The positive thing was the realization that you were in an environment of several different heritages at a very early age. I remember very strongly that my friends were different cultural backgrounds, yet there was something there that was Guyanese. For example, among my close friends, were Asians, Chinese, Black, British, and Portuguese of course. There was a sense of exposure to different cultures and that I grew up with a kind of appreciation for what contributed to your being 'worldly'" (Interview no. 41. 27 September 1995).

In spite of this, her story expresses how a fragment of home can disrupt the whole, as she experienced abandonment by a mother because of racial intolerance in the family. As she says,
I am trying to think of the first sense I have that there was some racial tension in my own family was also of multiple heritage (Ibid).

Her mother's identity represents certain fragments: "Black and Jewish heritage born in St. Kitts", while her father's was "Madeiran Guyanese Portuguese" (Ibid). A merger such as this subverts her imagination of the unified culture.

In other experiences, some Caribbean women class is experienced in fragments simultaneously or sequentially as told in the following two stories. First, when I asked Sumanta, of Indian heritage, about her background, she replied:

I would describe it as working class, though my mother was a teacher, yet it is hard for me to define that, because of the difference. First from her roots, as a gardener, working in the rice fields and selling in the market to pay her way to go to school, and after to Teachers' College. Then my father working in the land. We were a semi-urban people, we lived in ... My mother's family was from the rural. The marriage broke up. My father was from ... He did their gardening (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).

Then I heard Haniffa's story, as she says,

My parents' marriage was an arranged one, and many people in Guyana whether it was Indian or Black, marriages were arranged in those days. My father is an only son. My Dad's stepmother did not produce any boys, so there was a lot of rift in the family around him. When my Mom married my Dad, she inherited that rift. My grandparents had a lot of property, but they did not want to inherit that marriage. My parents lived across the street renting a one-room flat. My parents survived a lot. My Dad used to clean the street gutters, fix things. He built himself up. When I was born they were more financially secure. My parents had just bought a cinema (Interview no. 4. 25 August 1994).

The fragmented society as the Caribbean that forges survival, embraces a system of hierarchical structures in the categories of race, class, and gender and produces levels of marginalization and divisiveness. In order to sustain a framework that often reconstitute or rupture the fragments, the system of social stratification institutes some form of stable
recognition of difference in the society. I now discuss how this system is accommodated in the mind as an integral aspect of home.

**Home layers identities: stratification.** In Chapter III, I discussed the continuum of diversity that constructs a social, cultural, and political entity identified as the Caribbean. Cultures survive in disparate contexts. Class mobility to adopt western values enables the positioning of Caribbean peoples to create a structure of social stratification. Stratification as it relates to race/colour and class in the subjective experiences of this group of Caribbean women in Canada, is a feature that frames the understanding of home. This quote is an example of how my subjects are affected:

> As I reflect, I wonder how people who were lighter than myself had the privilege, a better chance at everything. The island was racial: separate clubs for whites. These things didn't bother us, for you see, outside the schools when you went into your community it was very cohesive, so you didn't feel inferior, unlike here. There were no racial slurs or people making you feel you aren't any good (Interview no. 23. 23 August 1995).

Mabel appears to accommodate difference at home because of the structure of her immediate family to support her. Racial divisiveness seems to have no effect on the strengths she experienced even as a member of a segregated Black community. Yet she acknowledges racial inequalities brought privileges to Whites. These privileges which Whites appropriate then produces Blacks as inferior and poor, in spite of the two groups occupying similar positions in schools. Mabel has to construct a subjectivity which makes her conscious that home exists in two worlds, one, family/community, to affirm; and the other, outsiders, to reject her own identity.¹⁶ This twentieth century social environment causes her to experience the residual effects of race and ethnic divisions instituted by the plantation economy and colonialism. Eric Williams (1970) convincingly refers to this economy as "King sugar" that determined a status for poor whites; and dominated
demographically enslaved Africans and indentured Asians in that order (111). In addition, Mabels of the Caribbean, have to experience gender in a discriminatory way as it interlocks with race and class.

Another form of consciousness of stratification which takes up the interlocking systems is expressed in Roberta’s words. According to her story, when I analyze identities of Caribbean women I have to address certain subject positions in discourses of education and religion. These discourses produce practices that prioritize privilege for the female descendants of European heritages. She says,

It made such a big difference when I went to school, at high school, I mean. At elementary school there were few White people preparing to go to high school, yet at the high school, there were more White people than Black people. There were few of us Black students at the Convent. One, because it was a private school, and you had to pay, and two, at that time, they were quite restrictive. You had to be a Catholic to go to that school. Even some students had to change their religions to go to the Convent. That changed over the years … (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

I see in this statement that racial privilege of Whites minimises the representation of Blacks in higher status levels. Yet, given the consequences of White servitude discussed in Chapter III, both groups could be equalized in economic terms and represented in elementary schools no doubt as the underclass. This experience reflects a complexity that emerges from the historical process, mapped in Chapter III. The result is while White elites can be identified at the top of the stratification scale, there is at times a positioning of Blacks and poor Whites which equalizes these groups. When Whites enter at the highest level, their positioning may be due to the privilege which accompanies race. Blacks then, in experiencing the interlocking systems of race and class, resist an inferior status by paying for the same privileges in education for their children like Roberta who attended
Catholic schools. Yet, for Blacks, the sharing of class privilege with Whites, does not preclude covert racism and barriers to achievement later on. She has this to say,

...I got an interview with the Ministry of Education in Barbados, and that meant, I realized that I was accepted into medicine. At the interview I was asked questions that really sort of teed me off, even now. I realized I would not get a bursary, a scholarship, not because I was not eligible, I suppose I didn’t have the right connections. That year, one person who got one of those scholarships, she was not from Barbados. Her family had stores on Broad Street. They owned shoe stores and other stores. I wouldn’t deny she was bright, but she was one of the persons who got one of those scholarships, I didn’t (Interview no 18. 7 June 1995).

In spite of this experience in the Caribbean region of the common practices to inferiorize Caribbean women of African descent, the workings of the interlocking systems of race and class are sometimes reversed. Lucinda, a woman of Mixed Race, Maroon and European, in her story which includes how social stratification influenced her vision of home says this:

Before I left home, my Mom who is much fairer than I am, went through so much discrimination, because she was poor. I remember her telling us a story that she went for a job once as a housekeeper, and the woman looked at her and said, “we can’t hire you, because they wouldn’t know who is the servant, who is the master.” (laughter) (Interview no. 24. 21 June 1995).

Race and class discrimination seems to be experienced differently by all Caribbean women in my sample. The differences are due to the historical consequences of a highly complex society where boundaries constantly overlapped in race and class mixings and crossings, irrespective of class position on the scale. In the concept of home, however, the majority of people who mainly have appearances of Africans have a strong history of economic disadvantages. This fact does not exclude the presence of poverty among people of Asian and other heritages. While there are some of African heritage who have acquired social and economic status, many have internalized that in the stratification system "Black" people
are positioned to lead precarious lives that end in underachievement. This appears to have turned up in this quote by Lena, African:

Back home, Trinidad, me? an ordinary middle class person? We were poor! therefore we did not have such things like an identity. I, as a young person, did not consider myself to be anything special. Yet I have a feeling that things that occurred to me were indeed very special. The first good thing that happened to me is after having left Naparima High School in San Fernando, I was accepted for training in the Port of Spain hospital. I didn't really want to be a nurse, but a friend encouraged me and sent my name in, and they accepted me. My boss at Imperial Stores, where I was a clerk, encouraged me also, so with his blessings I started nursing (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995).

The consciousness of negative ideas associated with the Black Caribbean (woman) identity and the contingency to attain status go hand in hand in this Caribbean woman's story. Her situation is typical for some Black Caribbean women in the fifties and early sixties. It was a common story then, that resonates in my own. That is, some of us Caribbean women held on to ambitious goals because of our secondary education. Opportunities to materialize these goals were weak because of lack of family finances. Success, as Lena relates to us, came through chance encounters. By comparison, other Caribbean women, had some clear possibilities to pursue their goals of liberation. This was the case of Abike, of European, African, and Chinese heritages. She says,

My mother had died in August, I was alone with my future. I never thought of myself as university material. I didn't see myself as exceptionally bright or otherwise, really I didn't have any great ambitions. I thought I would go to the hospital and train to be a nurse. That's all I had in mind. Anyway the nuns in Grenada, wrote the nuns in St Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the reply came I would start my semester the next week and I left (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

Her story differs from Lena in that it contains the underpinning of material wealth which often comes with race and class. In spite of this difference, the stories suggest there is a common commitment to resistance of either marginality or subjugation from the point
of view of gender. The responses of these two Caribbean women are alike because they both display a desire to self-actualize.

Yet another example of the effect of social stratification on the understanding of home can be found among some women whose class position creates experiences of radical opposition to inequities. As Abena, of African heritage, admits, those experiences served to her advantage in the diaspora. She says,

I don't think the kind of experiences I had here (Canada) could have given me the kind of strength that I drew from the past. I grew up in a predominantly African community-east end part of Jamaica...I grew up among the Rastafarians, and those who supported Marcus Garvey and who were treated very badly by the system. Rastafarian was not embraced by the society, especially in those days (Interview no. 29. 11 July 1995).

In other words, for Caribbean societies, resistance to marginalization and material deprivation produces both difference and oppositional politics. These politics emerge among groups who are politicized as targets of other faces of oppression, such as powerlessness, and violence (Young 1990). Abena's reality of home involves confrontation of dominant ideologies. It is in contrast with some other Caribbean women who can struggle against these same ideologies within the private sphere of home. Simone, of European, African and Portuguese heritages, expresses the struggle at home this way. She says,

For me, class was one of the big issues in my family. You are supposed to do well. You are a Wollankas, 18 whatever that meant! And in my family we had judges, we had alcoholics, like any family. My father worked on the road in Kingston, it is not as if he was used to a life of privilege. His father was an overseer. My father worked his way up from that kind of job to a white-collar job in sales. He believed very strongly in treating people fairly. At the same time he believed in people knowing their place. And God knows that is something that distresses me! (Interview no. 23. 22 June 1995).
Her story suggests how she rejected efforts made by parents to homogenize the middle class home into respectability. This sense of resisting marginality with respectability through a social class resonates in the story of how some Chinese Caribbean women's memory of 'home'. Marilyn tells of her experience of social stratification system this way:

I remember being baptized in the Catholic Church, in order to get into a good school, so my Dad named all the daughters Mary (laughter). So for us it was always a struggle to fit in, just like you might experience it here. We were struggling from birth to fit in any my parents added to that by saying, "Our Chinese people built a Chinese Association so that young people would go and meet each other". They did not want us associating outside of our race. We knew that those who didn't obey were bad. It happened to a lot of people-they intermarried (Interview no. 39. 29 August 1995).

Marilyn's acculturation did not come through racial mixing, but by gaining social mobility through a Church affiliation that would link her as well as her siblings to education, improving her chances to survive. The situation was not so benign in another part of the Caribbean, where racial politics turned into violence, and exposed the hatred in the dichotomy of race, African/Indians. Sastra, of Indian heritage, in her story tells us how she viewed home in terms of how the layers of class and race got intertwined, she says,

My experience in my parent's home was, you see, my mother's friend, an African woman of social class, who was a Christian and a teacher, bonded with her. My mother had no formal schooling, but had learnt to read Shakespeare, novels and poems because of this woman, Miss Mattie the schoolteacher. She got the respect, the China teacup, she passed through the front door! But, the relatives from the ricefield came to the back door and got the enamel cup. Later on as an adult our country went into revolution, slaughtering each other went on, and the Into-Guyanese were being attacked. I was in a mining town and my neighbour who was African, called out to me and warned me to leave, she said "they are going to kill every East Indian person they find". And she offered to carry me on the boat that night. We also heard from Miss Mattie that we should leave, so we got on a ferry and it was an Afro-Guyanese who put his jacket over our babies. So at the personal level you have these deep relationships, and then at the national level people killing each other (Interview no. 36. 29 August 1995).
Sastra, as well as Marilyn, learned how social conditions can produce certain identities. The positions that individuals take up among the different strata of the society can lift barriers and disrupt clear divisions. All the stories of Caribbean women in my study portray how race and class fit into a social stratification system. These few stories exemplify how experiences of race and class vastly vary so that analysis is difficult to describe adequately these interweaving systems that organize and regulate their subjectivities in gender.

To conclude I draw some themes from the stories in my sample that suggest to me social stratification is one of the complexities that is recognized in home. Caribbean women of diverse heritages—African, Chinese, Indian and combinations of these and more—experience marginalization on the basis of several different factors of race and class. The reality, however, is that one is unable to mark the system of social stratification as dichotomous: Black/White. The range of differences of race and ethnicity has always been very complicated. Yet in parts of the Anglophone Caribbean, Africans and Indians have been constructed as politically dichotomous. At the popular level, the positioning of groups can either be done by ethnicity, which is woven around a need for respectability, or by grades of skin colour which may or may not at all times be associated with material worth. Although I am attempting here to describe various stratifications in Caribbean societies, the women in this study did not recall these hierarchical systems as constituting an overwhelming barrier to their success. Instead, they articulated how they learn to strive beyond such tensions towards self-definition. Hence I tested my own interpretation of their stories with some sociological analysis of the Caribbean society to examine my reasoning.
Current research done in the Caribbean countries on class, and social stratification has not been able to change the picture that is painted by these women's voices on home. In brief, studies on the two largest populated territories in the Anglophone Caribbean region show the following. In Jamaica, there is an indication that social mobility may frequently shift class and status inter-generationally for women and men (Gordon 1987). In Trinidad and Tobago, an individual's promotion in the system depends on academic achievement and various forms of wealth (Ryan 1991). By and large these social scientists acclaim the colonial order has been replaced. Yet emerging from the largest of the Anglophone Caribbean countries these studies recognize the intensity of the disparities within postcolonial systems. There is the occurrence of rampant unemployment and underemployment as social factors that create many societal antagonisms. While mobility changes have occurred within the category of race, given the gendered nature of stratification, the improvement of women's position is negligible.\(^{19}\)

Imperialism has produced a Caribbean society that defies western ideas of a homogenized identity. Home, therefore, manifests itself in these Caribbean women's minds through a multiple and complex set of positives and negatives. It is a condition to which they apply resistance either to negotiate possibilities for survival or to tolerate victimization. Knowledge of self, whether a woman thinks of herself in terms of heritage as African, Chinese, European, Indian or Mixed Race, may only be perceived in fragments of culture, race, and class. In spite of the fact that these Caribbean women can perceive levels of cultural integration, they are a diverse group. Their identities are products of interconnected histories, that I discussed in Chapter III, justifying how we can relate to
them as Caribbean migrant subjects. Yet from a gender perspective they do not escape the
effects of domination relative to their race, class, sexuality or any status.

My examination of rootlessness, fragmentation, and stratification in the concept of
home shows how these features shape a Caribbean woman's understanding of her society.
When these women in my study refer to home, it means for them roots are not planted
permanently in one space. They know there are many spaces that Caribbean women can
occupy and acknowledge as home. Home is a site that embraces family and community,
and any geographical location in which these groups are nurtured. In addition, Caribbean
women can see the idea of home reflected in their locations within or outside a diversity
of cultures, and sometimes they are not clearly positioned as an integral part of any.
Finally, they consider home with an understanding that race as a socially constructed
category does not rigidly fit into the dichotomous thinking of black/white. Instead, they
are made to view an experience of race as the historical racialization of diverse groups—not
only African—and understand there is linking in this act to the subordination of equally as
diverse Caribbean women.

The picture that I am drawing in my study is not a monolithic one of home. I
present this concept with the different clusters of social, political and cultural practices,
recreating traditions and modifying them to form a creolization process which I addressed
in Chapter III. Caribbean women in my study believe home to be the source of strengths
through the everyday practices that framed resistance and constructed subjectivities. I
emphasize home exists in the imagination as a site where a Caribbean woman believes she
has a right to belong. It lives in her consciousness as a place where a variety of things are
combined to indicate that resistance to domination/subordination is essential. For
Caribbean women in my study, home is not a delusion of being in a situated, fixed and safe place. These women believe it is a place from which they have derived values to oppose victimization. They do not construct home in their minds as a place from which they have been displaced, nor do they speak of an absence of desire to return. These Caribbean women retain, in other words, a strong affiliation with home. It is the place where they can be recognized as belonging to a community. In contrast, the diaspora offers no easy belonging. Instead, various labels divide Caribbean peoples arbitrarily in Canada’s idea of multiculturalism. Labels like "Black", "South Asian", "visible minority" are handy to support divisiveness in the dominant system of Canada. They, however, are unfamiliar and alienating when they are used to identify Caribbean women. Consequently, these women feel they must return home for self affirmation, as Sumanta says,

I started going back every two years. In my twenties I started doing that. It was part of me finding myself and reconnecting with Trinidad helped a lot, taking in the culture, and the mixture and the religion. Connecting with my grandmother made me connect a lot with myself (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).

In addition, the desire for home is real during the period of settlement, mainly because it is centred in community, and we find a Caribbean woman’s nostalgia may manifest itself this way. As Kamla says:

I remember reading CONTRAST and seeing there is a Caribbean Catholic Centre. So I went to their services and I started going and ever since I am a member of the church. It is the first place that I felt like home (Interview no. 39. 5 September 1995).

Why was finding 'home' in Canada so important to Caribbean women? Is it because of their need to cope with difference and particular kinds of oppressions in Canada? or, because of their displacement? In reply to those questions, I offer my notion that home is where they learnt resistance. In the next chapter I explore this notion of 'home' by
discussing details of many stories that enriched this idea of home and that indicated to me how Caribbean women bridged the gap between their lives in the Caribbean and Canada. To close, I return to Boyce Davies (1994) who makes this crucial point about where home lies. It is in the reinventing of the self in the shifting boundaries between a Caribbean context (the older women), and negotiating with the demands of the metropolitan society. She writes:

Caught on the borders between two culture areas, and between exile and home, movement and fixity, these daughters who nevertheless listened, evoke the landscape, food, people, stories of the Caribbean. Writing home means communicating with home. But it also means finding ways to express the conflicted meaning of home in the experience of the formerly colonized. It also demands a continual rewriting of the boundaries of what constitutes home (129).

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: Home is a mixture of many things, conflicts, compassion, support, humour, bitterness, affection and so on.

2. Paule Marshall and Audre Lorde who are of the same generation, have their works steeped in the "second wave of migration between two world wars" (115), and are daughters of parents born in the Caribbean. They can be said to come to an awareness of a Caribbean identity within a re-creation of a Caribbean home in the US. Jamaica Kincaid and Michelle Cliff, who were born and raised in the Caribbean, have been engaged with the structures and meaning of a Caribbean identity. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, London and New York: 1994.

3. The works of these authors, as Boyce Davies (1994) explains, address notions of "home" through issues of conflict such as the migration and settlement of Caribbean people (Marshall 1959); the emergence of a lesbianism (Lorde 1982); the differences in racial identity between "homes" (Cliff 1980); and the impact on experience working class at "home" of British colonialism and American imperialism (1983). These dates indicate first publications, but Boyce Davies' critique covers other works as well.

5. Barrow (1996) is critical of conventional socio-anthropological research prevalent in the region which adheres to the nuclear family model and renders the Caribbean brand of family as "unstable" and "dysfunctional". *Family in the Caribbean: Themes and Perspectives*, Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle.

6. This finding resonates in Dionne Brand's (1988) *Photograph* which I discussed in Chapter I.

7. Barrow (1996) notes that arranged marriages, followed by newly weds taking up residence in the household of the groom's family created extended households and a Caribbean Indian ideal joint family, with the home operating as one economic unit. This practice has been reduced to having sons and families in residences close by, thus continuing the effect of community in the socialization process of children. *Family in the Caribbean*, Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle.


9. I use the term "fighting" to mean in the context of Trinidad and Tobago as engaging in critical thinking, and doing proactive work for a system which may "guarantee rights without prejudice". Bukka Rennie (1998). Fighting or fighting up. *Internet Express. Opinion*. Monday 10 August 1998.

10. I use this expression which my colleagues and I employed to describe the post-independence status of the economy in Trinidad and Tobago, because it vividly expresses the instability of economic patterns among which the masses were entrapped in order to eke out a living.


12. Resistance patterns which indicate that African people, for example, were not prepared to be rooted in the Caribbean, are in such activities like the Marcus Garvey Movement in 1914, which spread throughout the Caribbean.

13. For Best (1970) the fragmented nature of the Caribbean economy this way bears of a complex picture in which, there exists, on the hand, some elements of capitalism, piracy, mercantilism, militarism, communalism, petty trading on the political side. On the other hand, there is the social/cultural schism which contain race, class, customs, languages during slavery, to establish Afro/Euro-Creole dominance; and ethnicity, missionaries, newer customs, languages and religions of Asian and Eastern European
origins in the post-Emancipation period.

14. In current times, we are aware of the polarisation of politics on the basis of race, particularly in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, and in Jamaica between ethnic lines of African heritage. Any changes whether political or cultural create a horrendous amount of debate and airing of feelings which amounts to a binary syndrome of rejection/acceptance. Much of this we learn daily on the Internet press, which gives the vivid and juicy picture of conflict and collaboration.

15. Hollywood contributed to the exoticism of the Spanish in the form of Carmen Miranda, who became a legend in Hollywood acting in the fifties, and appeared in films as a dancer and a singer—the mystique of a woman—partially speaking English well, however exhibiting sensuous and titillating behaviour.

16. For a critique of Caribbean racism see Honor Ford-Smith's (1994). Peeling Back the Skin: Whiteness and Gender in Late Colonial Jamaica, unpublished M.A. Thesis in which she argues how race structures desires of individuals.

17. Abike describes her father as White American, who was once owner of a large plantation in one of the countries of the Caribbean (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

18. I replace the interviewee’s family name with an imaginative word. She uses her name to express how some of her family view it as being able to bring distinction to their class (Interview no. 23. 22 June 1995).

19. With respect to this point, I quote directly from studies accessed. "This study showed clearly the differential experiences of the two sexes... It was found for example that although female labour force participation rates remained low, they were experiencing the greatest mobility in all ethnic groups. This was specially so for Indian females who in 1980 still had the lowest rates of all groups. As with Africans, however, the advances made by women into middle strata "white collar" occupations was not reflected at the lower levels. Indeed the manual occupations continued to be heavily male dominated." (232) Rhoda Reddock (1991). Social Mobility in Trinidad and Tobago 1960-1980. In Selwyn Ryan (Ed.) Social & Occupational Stratification in Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago. St. Augustine: ISER, University of the West Indies.

"Men were more likely to be small proprietors (38 to 30 per cent) and to be small farmers. While 33 per cent, or about three -quarters of male small proprietors were as likely to be small traders or engaged in independent service occupations like hairdressing or the catering trade, as they were likely to be small farmers.... Important inequalities also existed within the working class. Men were more likely to be operatives than were women who were in turn over-represented in the service occupations" (16). Derek Gordon (1987). Class, Status and Social Mobility. Kingston, Jamaica: ISER, University of the West Indies.
CHAPTER VI

HOME IS THE SITE OF LEARNING RESISTANCE

Yard tallawa

I think that some of my strength and character came from my mother. My mother was father, caretaker, doctor, medicine woman and everything. She taught in a Hindu school, and spoke Hindi fluently. (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995)

Claiming "home" as a site of learning resistance. The quotation above exemplifies one of the reasons I choose to develop this notion: "home is a site of learning resistance". I consider it to be a site of social learning, that means acquiring knowledge that enables some Caribbean-Canadian to meet the challenges of life; and to resist any threats endangering their identities in the diaspora, according to what home has taught them. Their stories reflect how they learnt resistance and developed great admiration for the strengths of older women, and sometimes, men. Older women, mainly those who were either mothers, grandmothers, aunts or guardians, are remembered as displaying in various ways, tremendous strengths of independence. As a result, these women in my sample relate tales of relationships that developed models for learning and opportunities for relaying these strengths. The impact of these relationships is such that they consider these older women to be moving forces, describing them as "advanced" or "feminists". These are the women who mostly taught them the rules of survival through sometimes a unique pedagogy as Mabel explains,
You learn by seeing how people do things, and sometimes by anecdotes, the Anancy stories, that they tell you, you learn your culture indirectly. It is still so even now, for my brothers and sisters who were born here, because my mother, though she has been here for a long time, she is very much a Barbadian (Interview no. 33. 23 August 1995).

Her suggestion of the "Anancy stories" as a means of learning resistance, resonates in Richard Burton's (1997) work, *Afro-Creole*, in which he examines resistance and opposition in the everyday practices of enslaved Jamaicans prior to emancipation, 1800-1834. He analyses the paradoxical notion of opposition in which story telling featured, foremost around the character, Anancy, whose resourceful character prevails in many African folk tales up to this century, for its famous act of deceit and mischief to hoodwink or outsmart his victims. Burton describes him also as a "disrupter of structures" operating with tricks to favour the "existing order of things", that he can partly both confirm and subvert given the limits of his subversion (63). That is, Anancy can make himself the victim or victimize others and his manipulation of the White man's power would avenge his listeners' humiliation experienced in complicity with a life of being enslaved. Thus Burton sums him up as a

hero, scapegoat and object of opprobrium, Anancy is, in short a polyvalent symbol of the strengths and the weakness of a slave community (64).

Mabel's reference to Anancy stories in the twentieth century is significantly informative, because I suggest from my own experience, many older Caribbean women have had to use such adaptive strategies to survive. Adaptive strategies have in modern terms, forms of complicity, wit, and schemes to get by.³ Thus it is a combination of these is what many in this group of Caribbean women have seen in their homes. It is on this social terrain that they learned independence, as it relates to domination and subordination. This is where Caribbean women of the older generations in the Caribbean
region have made numerous contributions to the family economic and social status. The narratives of these activities remain largely ignored. It was within this site these women in my study observed behaviours of either assertiveness or powerlessness at times. The values that emerge from these contradictions are harboured in their consciousness and according to their stories, have been applied to current experiences of oppressions.

The social environment, home, resulting from a colonialist economy, is the context in which identities are engineered so as to set up independence as a way of responding to control and domination. Caribbean women irrespective of race, class, or sexuality learned to negotiate their identities in situations of domination before migration to Canada. In these negotiations these Caribbean women acted as agents, aggressively, or sometimes humbly, and connected themselves as subjects to discursive systems which otherwise would have degraded or victimized them. These women are able to display agency in acts of resistance. Resistance is to be understood as specific positive responses to everyday life experiences that includes oppressions. It is a historical legacy through which people have learnt to accommodate or to reject discursive practices and systems. Learning how to do this is what Caribbean women in my sample experienced at home. The areas of learning are, first, the ways in which older women have sought to gain economic freedom and status. Many of these women were working mothers or "othermothers" outside the home, regardless of having male providers. Caribbean women in my sample claim they heard these women stress the importance of education, because having knowledge was one of the ways to resist stereotyping. Also, they observed that these women, in striving for economic independence became self-empowered. Thus self-defining was yet another way that enabled them to develop varying degrees of social consciousness and commitment to community. Lastly,
they understood that all these things could not happen without Caribbean older women fostering spirituality through religious practices. These are the elements that create home as a learning site, in which women identified themselves. I will now use these factors to discuss my interpretations of their stories about learning at home.

**Learning responses to seek economic status.** In the historical process in Chapter III, I refer to ways in which labour equalized the status of Caribbean women and men of all races. That is, women as well as men, did plantation work. African women also are known to have done male dominated jobs, such as being stevedores (Beckles 1989). In addition, women alongside men, were active in resistance and revolt in the plantation system (Bush 1990). As Barrow (1988) pointed out capitalism historically was different in regard to the treatment of Caribbean women, because it did not confine them to "home and domestic affairs, allowing a measure of equality of the sexes" (165). Hence, Daisy in my sample can confirm: "Jamaican women have always had to work". This is a fact for her because the continuing structural adjustment policies in colonial and neo-colonial times have occasioned the outmigration of males, and by far encouraged an increase in the number of female-headed households in the region (Osirim 1997; Massiah 1983). As a result these policies have forced Anglophone Caribbean women to empower themselves by becoming entrepreneurs in gender-segregated jobs such as, domestic work, higglering and wayside vending.

Caribbean women in the study recall memories like Mabel's,

I look back at the period of my grandmother, who died at 92, and she never seemed old to me. She worked very hard, because cooking was an all day job. I guess your life is defined by your work. She used to sell pudding and things off the land. I remember at a young age I'd help her do that (Interview no. 33. 23 August 1995).
Momma was a very independent woman. She was able, even though she stayed at home, she did work from time to time, raising pigs and turkeys. So she had her own money and a bank account. She would play the horses, and so she won some money at the horses and so she bought the land, and two small houses which she rented. So she taught us how to spend money and how to make money. Also two of my aunts worked, one took in washing for rich people and my other aunt worked in somebody’s house (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

I met Roberta when she had just been honoured in the Black community in Montreal. Though having a high school education, her story was not very different from many Caribbean migrant woman at the point of entry, with experiences of menial jobs. She is a university graduate, who at the time of the interview was employed in a medical sciences profession. As well, she created a self-run community ‘networking’ business, and initiated a number of advocacy efforts around community health issues.

Zora too, has a similar childhood experience of her mother. She worked from first entry jobs in Toronto to a university graduate and teaching professional. She was responsible for several community initiatives in issues of race, education and women. Her memory of home is of her mother who,

worked, we had a bakery which collapsed when my father gambled. She then baked out of home and she had these little shops she used to supply with cakes and pastry... She would try any little thing. I see her turn around money in one day like nobody’s business. She said she wasn’t going to let pride get in the way of trying to get money to make sure we went to school (Interview no. 31. 10 August 1995)

For Lena, a nurse and an actor, the reason why she took risks to balance her life between her profession and her theatre commitment was due to the example her mother had provided her. She was marvelling about her resilience, that she displayed in her then current appearance in a Canadian television advertisement, compared to her bouts of
depression over racism in Toronto theatre in the seventies. A nursing graduate who migrated from England early sixties, she was disenchanted with nursing professional practices and the race bias in hospitals. As a result, she opted for the insecurity of her first love, acting. I asked how she did it. She replied,

I don't know about laziness, I watched my mother work hard into the night. It worked to my advantage, because that stamina, that doing! She worked for several people all week, starching and ironing...and so this is how we got money. Since 1973, I have always had two and three jobs, I mention I used to sell Mutual funds, I also used to sell Holiday Magic, a make up system, while nursing (laughter). We are very productive people (Interview no. 27 28 June 1995).

The social learning of resistance to issues of discrimination is not entirely different for Lucinda, a light-skinned Caribbean woman. Racialized as an "immigrant woman" in Canada, she did not escape a life here in menial and laborious jobs in a leather factory. Her reflection on her struggles of race and gender through poverty in Canada to her achievement as university graduate and professional community worker, causes her to say,

I think that for me, over the years my strength was derived from my mother's power to be independent and to maintain high standards. My father moved back to England and left her with two kids. So she had jobs like sewing, even housekeeping to make sure that we were independent of anybody (Interview no. 24 21 June 1995).

Her mother's independent situation is produced by a Caribbean history of identity. Senior (1991) discusses the reality of gender stereotypes and consequent roles, and writes,

even among the [Caribbean] white women who came closest to the image, there were those among them who 'left homes, managed businesses, sought jobs outside the home and sometimes supported themselves without recourse to males'7 (41).

For some Caribbean women learning empowerment through economic independence also means, "no man could put me to sit down and wait 'pon he", as expressed by one of the respondents in Barrow's (1986) regional study (131). This assertion is replicated in what
Abena learned. Hers is a story that was filled with commitment to causes in the Black community, while she supported a family with two jobs, and improved her education at the same time. She attributed her courage to what she occur in her childhood, that is

My mother went and looked for a job because she did not like having constantly to ask my father for money. There used to be constant arguments because she liked to go to the …Hall to dance; and one day she said to him: "me na badder wid you, me gwan look wuk". She did a lot of domestic work and had her own cook shop downtown (Interview no. 29. 11 July 1995).

The popular thinking that Caribbean older women’s use of adaptive strategies is a display of aggressiveness, and trying to 'wear the pants' does not belong to my theorizing independence to cope with the oppression at home. I myself gained a great deal of respect for our women in their familial role, when I remember how my adopted mother’s skills enabled me to acquire paid high school education. This is the case in my story.

My adopted mother usually raised an alarm, her style, when she found some extraordinary news in the daily press. This day, her shout was somewhat more boisterous: she read of her husband’s resignation from his public servant job. He was to become a writer! I remember the silence at home that lasted for some days, until she told us two of four bedrooms were to be converted into a "nursing home". She mumbled something about "wasted space" to accommodate our sleeping areas for the family of ten. We weren’t allowed to use the phone freely; we had to keep our voices subdued, and a host of other restrictions. Yet I liked being a receptionist to the visitors, and I used to love to hear the first cries of babies, particularly in the early mornings.

I believe I internalized this experience. I know I interpret the action as linking independence with self-worth and respect, which in turn conveyed to me that there something extremely necessary in a woman having employable skills. The longterm result for me and others in the sample, is the urgency to use education as a strategy of resistance, an idea that I will discuss later. We are permanently conscious of the insidious nature of
subordination. We tend to feel there could be an armour against occupying victim positions or experiencing martyrdom.

Home is where a whole range of experiences and oppressions are gendered. It is then a space for Caribbean older women to perform assertively in domestic and occupational roles in resistance. We saw these women, not in the colonizer's stereotypical images of strengths that debased women but as resourceful. Our personal testimonies acknowledging the various and significant roles of women in our lives in Caribbean institutions of motherhood and economies can be supported by Caribbean regional research in the Women in Development Project (Senior 1991; Barrow 1986; Brodber 1986; Odie-Ali 1986). These studies provide evidence of the resourcefulness of Caribbean women as a distinct social group in periods of structural adjustment.

There is a link between economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance that empowers a Caribbean woman's self-identity, a link expressed in Collins' (1990) notion of the "power of self-definition" (91-114). She sees this for Black women in the United States. For many Caribbean women, regardless of social class, self-definition is constructed from their own consciousness of the perils of material subjugation, so that their responses of independence form a part of their liberation. They like Black American women, "encounter the theme of having work and family experiences shaped by the interlocking systems of race, class and gender" (Collins 1990:65). My study recognises the implications of colonialism in the categories of race, class, and sexuality that would differentiate women's learning of resistance. It also acknowledges the effects of the various and complex cultural factors that dominate the Anglophone Caribbean region. For instance, depending on the period of childhood, these factors could range from political nationalisms to perceptions
about social mobility through colour or ethnicity and its accompanying values. I now move to explore the contexts in which evidence of empowerment and self-definition, which Caribbean women learnt, materializes.

**Learning the process of empowerment and self-definition.** Both hooks (1991) and Hill Collins (1990) identify the emergence of a "radical black subjectivity", that they advocate is a product of self-definition. That is, they are of the view "Black" women have to transform their consciousness so as to bring about social change in the ideology of dominance. As a result of working through self-knowledge imposed on identity constructions of gender and race, Black women will liberate their own consciences. As hooks (1991) writes,

> part of our struggle for radical Black subjectivity is the quest to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory (29).

For Caribbean women, Reddock (1990) looks at the historical experiences of Caribbean women and argues how the meaning of Caribbean women's activism is embedded in a general definition of feminism. That is, their activism reflects

> the critical consciousness and awareness of women, a subordinated and/or exploited position in society and the commitment to do something to change it (12).

Caribbean women in the region construct radical subjectivities either in individual struggles, or in women's groups organizing in resistance as many of the stories of in my sample tell. Some women in my study spoke of "images of very strong women back home"; and others of women who "never took things sitting down" and who "questioned things". Although these younger women got a generally decisive picture of independent-minded older Caribbean women, sometimes the behaviour seems to be contradictory. Hence Maya says,
I found although she (mother) was dependent on him (father), she had an independent type of personality, even though she was traditional, that is knowing her place in the home, she wasn't submissive. So by observing her in relation to my father, I must have absorbed it in my pores, as it is like-I am not taking shit! (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).

Or, they sometimes see female investment in family life as opposed to male lack of commitment as also contradictory to radicalism for their women. Clarita in her story expressed this.

I am expressing a contradiction here, because on the one hand I acknowledge my mother's independence, yet she did not seem to understand, as I saw it, the privileges he got from his job (he was chauffeured back and forth to the base) that his earnings ought to be adequate enough to take care of us, instead, she kept doing all the necessary things to maintain our home. I admit that I repeated a lot of the stuff that my mother did, in trusting (Interview no. 19. 8 June 1995).

While ambivalence about gender relations in the home may prevail in the minds of some Caribbean-Canadian women, others see their previous generation of Caribbean women acting in concert with Audre Lorde's (1984) famous maxim: "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (112). For example, Aita remembers her mother's initiative, when she was three years old, in disagreement with her father, to leave him and move to another island. She, her mother and other siblings set up a household with her grandmother. Other stories about learning resistance in Caribbean homes expose self-autonomy in mothers, grandmothers, and aunts in that some women in my study were brought up in female-headed households. For instance, Yelena describes her learning from a cluster of Caribbean women, who redefine traditional images of women victimized by male dominance, as she says,

I remember being raised by a man, but, my paternal grandmother was strong and independent. She ended up being strong because she had to raise four sons as her husband gambled away the family fortunes. She used to buy coffee beans and grind them and send her sons on the street to sell. My
other grandmother too, who had a Chinese background, also had to raise sons on her own. Her husband abandoned her. Auntie J... taught me how to smoke and gamble. I remember Auntie K... who was strong and independent. They all taught me to be strong too, which means to take care of myself, and be independent yet respectful of other people (Interview 28. 29 June 1995).

Another example is Rebeka's attempt at constructing a self-hood, which may be influenced by the subject positions of many women with conflicting values and interests in the home, as she says,

Like many, many Caribbean families, there were different levels. My mother was a proprietor in a shop. I got daily mothering from Dada, my nanny from the day I was born. My great aunt was who was an extraordinary person, I think she was a lesbian, and she ran business with my uncle. Then there the nuns who didn't give me any sense of womanhood except in the religious sense. So it was a mix, on the one hand, my mother and Dada, although she was a bit subversive, with being a girl and getting married, and my great aunt who had a different view, not that she preached it. Even my mother had a sense of independence, although accepting quite a lot. She had her own circle of friends including male friends, and did not depend on my father socially (Interview no. 43. 11 December 1995).

A summary of the ways in which these Caribbean women see other women radicalize their subjectivities in the home might be appropriately understood in these simple words of conviction from Saida when I asked her how she survived,

I always have a goal to go forward. I got it from my mother and my grandmother, because they always tell us, you know, you never sit, if one thing fails you don't just sit and give up (Interview no. 17. 8 June 1995).

When I met Saida in Montreal she was at the end of another one of life's challenges, and she had come to say thanks to her social worker. A mother of three adopted children, and many times a foster mother as well, she came to Canada as a domestic worker. Her story is of her resistance in human ways to issues of race and gender. Along her journey between being self-employed and waged employment she was frequently victimized by
many oppressions simultaneously. Added to that, at times, as she describes her status as
dubious—foster mother? or married woman?—as her husband's conflicts with the law often
use to diminish her gains. Why is it she never gave up?

Caribbean women in the region, taught their daughters to persist in self-
empowerment, even when race/gender hierarchies planted by colonialism attempt to
regulate their lives. This is a skill that Zindzi learned and applies in her career as
community activist, anti-racism and diversity educator. She says,

It was in the days when the colonial inspectors were there...she (mother) always used to say 'you have to let these white people know their damn place'... and she never said what exactly that place was, but the way she said it, I knew exactly what she meant. I remember I couldn't be more than 6 or 7 years old, when the Anglican Vicar did something to upset her, and she asked him whether he thought he brought the school with him from England on his back, and told him that as long as she was Headmistress there he would not be crossing this threshold to give religious instruction (Interview no. 9. 23 September 1994).

Also women in my study, regardless of racial background, claim not to see older women
in prolonged positions of subordination. They often would see examples of liberated
women who broke patriarchal barriers. Radika tells of her mother's courage,

I saw my mother in total control of her life. It was a sort of matriarchal family: the women always made the decisions, the men talked politics. My mother would always challenge the men's arguments, while my aunts would try to divert the topic (Interview no. 11. 31 May 1995).

Similarly Sastra saw her mother this way,

For some Indian women being in the presence of men is not allowed, so this woman, my mother, with her strength of character always felt if the conversation was good she would be part of it. You see my father was a coward! (Interview no. 36. 29 August 1995).

This study brings a certain significance to the discourse of a Caribbean woman's
identity because it provides an understanding of a legacy of self-will in Caribbean women
of the previous generation, that has not yet been addressed collectively elsewhere. The frequency in the stories of these Caribbean-Canadian women of incidents of empowerment establishes that strengths of survival have influenced the construction of their subjectivities.

I provide some broad statements like Annzinga's to make my point,

I don't think I thought of it at the time, it is later on reflecting, the person who had most influence on me is my mother, as I think now, she was a feminist long before the word became popular! (Interview no. 45. 1 October 1995).

Also there is another made by Daisy, in acknowledging her mother's sacrifice as a strategy for survival.11

My mother was strong, and devoted to her family. I remember there were times when she would go without things so that her children would have (Interview no. 16. 7 June 1995).

Caribbean women in this sample see self-definition as practised by older women in their communities as employing agency to take themselves beyond rules governing race, class and gender. Sometimes they tell how they have seen working class women resist subordination even when their livelihood is dependent on middle class domestic situations.

As Rowena says,

J...was my nanny, from I was four years, she too influenced who I am as a woman. I loved her very much, she was my mother in the sense that she was the person who taught me a lot. She was a strong, opinionated woman who was not afraid of anybody. So her position in the house was quite clear, my mother went out to work, and G...ran the house as she see fit. She did not like housework and she was a housekeeper (Interview no. 37. 31 August 1995).

Also, they reflect on a memory of seeing how the intersection of race and class has helped these older Caribbean women to negotiate their independence in circumstances of poverty.

Roberta tells us,
Momma was a very independent and very, very strong woman. She gave me a story which is related to my being here in Canada. She talked about walking with her white mother, walking up a long avenue with trees on both sides, and to going to this big house, and because my grandmother was white, they went into the front door, to take eggs to this big house, to sell. That is in my memory even now (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

Caribbean women of the middle class learn in their childhood that their mothers and other Caribbean women could regulate lifestyles at home. That is, home may not be fixed yet it emerges as a space for empowerment, when women subvert gender roles. As Abike says,

My mother took over the plantation when my father died, she was very busy seeing that things well. My mother often shuttled between two places. We had two homes, one in P...which was across the river from the town. We lived there during school days and during the holidays we went to the plantation. At 7 years old, I was went off to boarding school (Interview no. 13. 7 June 1995).

Hence, Abike speaks of home as the entire Caribbean. She claims multiple homes in Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada and Dominica during her teenage years. Her many homes constitute an example of learning to understand diversity, which was useful to her in Canada, through the multiple social and religious influences to her own subjectivity from these different places.12

Home is also for an Indian-Caribbean woman, learning of self-empowerment through seeing equity practices in her household. Sastra saw her mother bridge the social gaps produced by colonialism and says,

I think the strongest of values I got from my mother was her sense of self, she was really grounded in her own identity, she never forgot her roots. What I learnt from her in this groundedness, is her social class split. My father was a landowner, but what she did was collect the peasants that we related to who were still barefoot in the mudfield, in the ricefield, and her sister who was an aristocratic in G...known as Anglais-Indians-they were more British than the British. And mother would let the rich and the poor pass through the same door (Interview no. 36. 29 August 1995).
Yet the picture is not homogeneous, a few Caribbean women had different experiences of Caribbean mothers' strengths. For example, Ariel whom I met in Montreal, claims her independence might have developed in resistance to her mother's conservatism. She, herself in Canada, has always been active in an underclass community, and was at the time of the interview one of the senior managers in her social service agency. Her initiate to migrate was in defiance of her mother's example to be a traditional woman. Ariel was able in Canada despite experiences of racism, alienation, severe illness and an unplanned pregnancy to use her independence to her advantage. She has a university education pursue education and has always been involved in community work. Looking back, she does not attribute her independence to her learning at home. She saw traditional women in the home as she says,

The way I was socialized is the woman is supposed to be at home, taking care of the children, taking care of the family needs, and the husband goes out and brings in the money. I sort of rebelled at a very early age, from that little pigeon-hole, that my grandmother did and my mother, to this day, is doing very, very well. My mother is the traditional wife, at age 80, still looks after her husband (Interview no. 15. 6 June 1995).

Her story brings to a close my discussion on the category, empowerment and self-definition, that embody the idea of the multifaceted nature of experience in the home. Home does not stop here, it continues with women's self-empowerment to transcend communities outside the walls of the house, as these other stories will tell.

Learning community through social consciousness. Home like community and nation is an imagined construct (Anderson 1991:6).\textsuperscript{13} Regardless of the inconsistencies that prevail, individuals believe that they belong to it as an entity that embraces safe relationships and nurturing with several and diverse people. Perhaps, home as I pointed out previously, is also romanticized by my subjects who recall
an inclusionary culture, with no sense of racial divisiveness most of the time, and most of all the presence of communal living. Yet, home imagined in this way, enables a social consciousness within a Caribbean woman to hold herself responsible first for herself, then her community that defines her. It appears to be less difficult to build and maintain a community because home is with her, that is, where she has learned to put agency and strengths to acts of resistance are her reality. Home is the embodiment of subjugated knowledge that she learned how to apply when the need arises for the liberation of self and community. Where did this all begin?

On the whole, Caribbean woman over the centuries, have developed consciousness of the ongoing processes of racism and sexism that produce racial and gendered divisiveness upon which their chances of survival were constructed. I discussed this in my section on women and history of resistance in Chapter III and explored it later in Chapter V. They learned to construct a legacy of resistance to serve communities in the tradition of ways to survive. Aretha, who has lived 37 years in Canada refers to her story to remind us of this legacy,

I see being a Caribbean woman as being from a strong background, where I always have worked in a community even though I was little (young). I think that continues in me. Sometimes when I look at it I see what I am doing, I see the need to do because my mother did it (Interview no. 34. 29 August 1995).

A senior Caribbean woman in my sample who spoke little about childhood influences, has a history of community work in her country of origin. Evelyne, whose resistance in Canada, is a reflection mainly of her own past in political Guyana as an Indian, middle class businesswoman says of herself,

I was involved in everything, church, town council. I always called them Town Scoundrels, member of the Police Commission. I thought I was going
to save my country in 1961. Things were happening, if I thought I was Joan of Arc, the people thought they could burn me up ... (Interview no. 1. 17 August 1995).

This empathy towards community needs is echoed in other stories in the less formal sense of women learning community as Nikki did, when she says,

My mother was undoubtably strong, not confrontative, that is one of things I have from her. She too was involved in community work, she was an active member of the Anglican Church and she was involved in the Mother's Union, and this and that. So I think that influenced some of my community interest (Interview no. 22. 17 June 1995).

For others, there are memories that home and community are collapsed, it is an experience of privilege, power, and class discrimination. I discuss Nisa's story extensively to illustrate the interweaving of race, colour and class that makes an intricate picture for constructing a subjectivity based on learning resistance at home. Nisa is light-skinned, and has lived in Canada for thirty years. She is married to a Chinese-Caribbean man. However, her activism in Canada has been with mainly in mainstream arts organizations, while she regrets not being "more part of the West Indian community". When I asked her what was responsible for her activism she replied,

I think I was related to everyone. It was a narrow community. We had a little basic school, which was training ground for my sisters and I. We all had to work in the basic school. My mother pretty well started it (Interview no. 14. 5 June 1995).

This prompted me to ask her to describe this community, she says,

It was a closely knit community. You see, my paternal grandparents were African/Irish mother; on the maternal side, Scottish/Spanish mother, and father Cuban. My aunt was quite Black, but very proud of being Black, but suspect of other Black people in the nearby districts coming in. They didn't encourage other people to move into the area at all. Looking back at the public school, it was the principal that they didn't particularly like. This is why they pulled out the children (Ibid).
I wondered about this as a learning experience at home and what effect it has on the formation of her subject position (Brah 1996). So I asked if she considered herself a person of privilege, she promptly replied,

Yes, yes, yes! At the same time when people from other areas needed help my mother was the first to go out and help. She was pretty open and generous-a woman who showed the strength of independence. She founded a women’s group which was cross-age, and she acquired pensions for older women. When anyone was ill she would take linen to them. She felt a change of linen was refreshing. She belonged to a small church which had opened up and they weren't doing well and she got together with the community, held a party, and used the proceeds to give the church, as she was convinced they were good people, whom she wanted to stay in the neighbourhood, so she helped them. She was that type of person. My father was basically the tough one who clung to what he had (Ibid.).

She defends her middle-class position with her mother’s altruism to the poor in the neighbourhood which is a manifestation of the "Lady Bountiful" syndrome (Ford-Smith 1986). Yet is her way of integrating her identity with community to define herself. I discussed this syndrome in Chapter III, drawing upon the works of both Reddock (1994) and Ford-Smith (1986) who described the role of a colonial woman or a creole white woman in the early days of the feminist movement, as organizing from a position of maternalism to speak and act on behalf of other Caribbean women. This complexity in the socialization processes when we examine the subjectivities of women in the Caribbean context is proof of contradictions and heterogeneity, that nevertheless make these women agents, or relatively radical. There are multiple structures within class and community through which some of the women learned to negotiate strengths in response to the effects of colonialism and patriarchy. Some of this multiplicity is also evident in Lauretta’s story, who grew up in two homes, one on her father’s estate, and the other with her mother in the city. It was a situation mutually agreed upon by both parents. Her mother’s leaving the
estate was not only an investment in improved family life, but an act that brought her much liberation from which Lauretta took example. Her life in the city was filled with activism: municipal politics, theatre and business to name a few. I asked her whether or not her mother mostly told her about her activities in the community, to which she replied

Not really, it was by doing. My mother was very people conscious, very political over what the government was doing. So she went to those meetings we were there. When she had dances to raise money were part of preparing for the dance, and running the dance. When she went to visit the poorer people, we were there. Well, she didn't take us to visit the leper home, she was afraid we might become infected. Of course, we were too young for the Mother's League. Oh yes, I was learning, because all those things I'm talking are things I do now, so I know I picked them up from her. Though I learnt more about race from my father who was very interested at the time in the civil rights movement in the United States (Interview no. 21. 14 June 1995).

Others in the sample endorse their learning to refuse to accept constraints as they observed their mothers' self-reliance to be active as they pleased. As Anne says,

My mother was a moving force in the family. She was involved in things outside the home-the church groups, the youth group, and I remember being involved and not having to receive anybody's permission. Once she decided to do something she went ahead and did it. I was influenced by her, as I know that many times it scares me because I am so much like her (Interview no. 12. 7 June 1995).

Caribbean women's stories contextualized in a working class background present a direct struggle with neo-colonialist hegemony to combat social marginalization and economic deprivation. These stories are not those that a level of altruism can permeate as it does in middle class activism in the community. Abena tells,

I became involved politically at a very young age because that was a poor community, not protected by the system itself and to this day we have a close bond. I grew up in a community where everybody knew everybody else. That history is so strong. It is where I got my first exposure to activism when I was very, very young. I became socially conscious very early as a teenager (Interview no. 29. 11 June 1995).
However, in whatever way it was done, Caribbean-Canadian women learned from the reality of community. As Alice says,

I think that I developed social consciousness-I was saying the other day to friend-at a very early age because of the role of my grandmother and aunt played in the community in Grenada. It was they who were concerned enough to ensure that everyone in the neighbourhood had milk for the children. They would ensure that Mrs. F...'s children up the road had shoes, because a daughter was bright and entering high school. I think I saw that growing up and I knew, you know, sharing and sense of community and community responsibility is a very special value that I received from them (Interview no. 30. 8 August 1995).

Chinese Caribbean women though as active as other groups in the diaspora do not reflect on social learning about community in the same way. There is an ambivalence to centralize community as part of learning resistance. They relate community to the struggles of Chinese integration in Caribbean societies from which they are marginalized. Yet there is a dependence on community formations by the Chinese in their own ethnic groupings.

As Kim speaks,

I was not in a community-minded group. I left that to our parents because they had a sort of Chinese club-Chinese Benevolent society. There was a Chinese name as well. It was the older ones who went there. Just like the Chinese-Caribbean Association up here. It is only the older ones who participate: you see the similarity (Interview no. 8. 6 September 1995).

Marilyn, also of a Chinese Caribbean background, makes this point even clearer when she talks about how the creole community, Anglicans and Roman Catholics respectively solicited her parents interest in either of these religions at different times. She says,

For us it was always a struggle to fit in, just like the experience here. We were struggling from birth just like you might experience here. My parents did not want to associate with outside our race. They said they built a Chinese Association so that young people would go and meet each other. Yet we were brought up by the neighbours, that's how we were named (western) (Interview no. 39. 6 September 1995).
Women of predominantly Chinese and Indian heritage, learned to live privately in an ethnic sphere, and publicly they were coerced to creolize. Yet they were less seen to be a part of the creolized society, but were stereotyped by people of other races as exotic or experiencing privilege (Ryan 1991). Mainly the surge of nationalisms caused a reduction in the level of exchange of racial slurs—African; Chinese; and Indian—that use to deepen the divisiveness created by colonialism (Ho 1989; Mohammed 1988; Howard 1987). These are Caribbean women who learned to bridge the gap between belonging and marginalization.

All Caribbean women in my sample experienced community in a variety of ways, but generally it is a site where they saw older women demonstrate against social and economic policies. To manipulate their energies on this site, these older women structured a Caribbean female identity consisting of the working woman and the community activist. Within this dualism, women in my sample, observed older women's consciousness in preserving human values. In the Caribbean, these women either saw others experiencing economic deprivation that caused older women to share kindness and material things, or to politicize social issues for justice. Younger Caribbean women were forced to be a part of many of these activities and influenced by them. Brodber (1986) describes this activity as acquiring "emotional expansiveness" (25) that engenders an ability to relate to multiple sources from which distinct or overlapping values would spring. I also argue that movement in and out of spaces called home constitute the multiple subjectivities of women, as their stories briefly address these different positions (Mama 1995). Many older Caribbean women worked outside the home in formal jobs such as teaching, or performed domestic jobs for outsiders in the home, but they neither gave up their roles as mothers or
voluntary community workers nor as women in relations with men. These women in my study all have stories of influences overlapping or shifting among their relationships with parents, relatives and paid care providers. Out of almost all of these relationships, education emerged as a pressing need. Caring adults perceived themselves as having failed to experience social mobility, so they thrust that responsibility on the children in the home while urging and supporting them.

**Learning the value of education in resistance:**

The Caribbean women in this study of all social classes and heritages attach tremendous significance to education. They all emphasize the persistent encouragement they got as children to acquire education. Sumanta who says her home was a mixture of "playfulness" and "violence" stresses how she learned the importance of education there.

My mother always pushed me to school. My mom was a teacher...she would take me into her classes and she used to encourage me to learn. Both my parents did, my mother more, she valued education a lot (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).

It is clear older women were convinced that education was a transformative tool for use in every activity of life. I remember being told that 'education opened doors to life' that on reflection served enormously to justify my goals internationally, and to sustain my interest in community education as a career. Caribbean women in the sample spoke about learning that education was a model of empowerment with such frequency that I used it as one of the items for the focus group meeting. When I asked this group of Caribbean women to discuss education as an element in the Caribbean female ideology this is what took place. I have selected these statements that summarize the stories of each participant,

*Toni:* Education was tied to class at home. We were taught that education would broaden your mind and lead you to upward mobility.
Marilyn: My Dad was very protective. His attitude was that you get the best education, be as ladylike as possible.

Sاقترا: Education for me was a word, for my age group of Guyanese women, especially East Indian women, education was not for my agenda, it was for my brother.

Aretha: Education was key, extremely valuable, more important than to earn money. I knew I had to get this education, I came late in the family, everyone else had gone off and done great things, I had to follow suit (Focus group meeting. 29 August 1995).

Thus with the exception of Sastra's remarks that are differently contextualized at that time for her race, some Caribbean women learned that education was a strategy of resistance. Sastra's personal yearning was fulfilled when years after migration to Canada she acquired university education. Sastra's statement can be explained in the discussion which follows. In the early twentieth century, Reddock (1994) states the records have shown that the enrolment of Indian girls in Christian schools in Trinidad and Tobago was 39.1% in 1938, because they were thought to be a more worthwhile investment in agriculture and domestic labour. She writes,

Thus we find that by 1937, girls comprised approximately 45% of the enrolled primary school population. The difference between boys' and girls' enrolment can largely be accounted for by the lower enrolment of Indian girls, especially after the age of nine or ten. In 1938, girls comprise 39.1% of the enrolment of the predominantly Indian Canadian (Presbyterian) schools, an increase from 28.1% in 1899 (Hamel-Smith 1979:25) (50).

Mohammed (1988) in other documentation shows that in 1946, also in that country, 65.7% of Indian females ten years and older were challenged with standards of literacy as opposed to 10.1% of those of African descent, and 8.3% of Chinese. The patriarchy "thought it was unwise to educate girls" (389). According to Shepherd (1993) Indian females in the 1940s, were the worst off economically of the freed and indentured peoples because of problems of inadequate schooling, as well as, access to land (246, 247). However, Senior (1991),
a Caribbean scholar, in discussing education and gender-role stereotyping in the research, Women in the Caribbean Project, makes the point that educational opportunities for girls have increased dramatically over the last few decades and have changed the picture since. Qualitatively these changes have not produced equality with men as numerous women remain in low-paid occupations, as she writes explaining the paradox,

At the individual level, women are achieving breakthroughs and in some cases approaching numerical equality in some of the formerly 'male' professions. Yet, for the broad masses of women, educational advances have so far not been reflected in substantial improvement in their status in the world beyond school. The majority of women are still to be found in domestic labour, or in white-collar jobs such as teaching and nursing, both low-paid occupations (45).

In Black feminist thinking, (Collins 1990) asserts that the commitment of Black women to education is linked to notions of leadership and empowerment. Senior (1991) also says "education is a key to woman's empowerment" and argues that Caribbean women take education seriously as a means of "upward social mobility and improved socio-economic status" (44). These women in my sample make a number of retrospective statements that illustrate Senior's (1991) assertion, about the highly motivated efforts they received, especially from mothers and grandmothers to acquire education. For example, Mabel says

a lot of values were instilled in us, like it was important for us to get a good education, that was not questioned. It was not like you have to, here in Canada, get a degree! It was more you have to learn something. They weren't too sure how far you could go (Interview no. 33. 23 August 1995).

then Alice joins her,

I think the greatest influence in my life and it's true even today has been my grandmother. We talk together all the time. I think one of the things she gave us was ambition. She was determined the children and her children's children were going to make something of their lives, and so education was
certainly the most important thing to achieve (Interview no. 30. 8 August 1995).

Then Yaa says,

I think based on my grandmother and my aunt, I would say the prescription would be get yourself a good education and stay off the street (Interview no. 10. 29 May 1995).

Finally, Lena introduces the notion of gender in education, and says

There isn't that much or a consciousness to follow a role. It was not that you had to do this. We just took it naturally that we had to go to school, and we had to be educated, and become something. Where men could do many things—they could go off to Pointe-a-Pierre and become architects, draughtsmen, plumbers and the many careers allotted to them, we women had either to be a nurse or a teacher (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995).

Older Caribbean women had internalized the extreme importance in the construction of a Caribbean female identity because of the history of resistance in struggles for equality, first, as enslaved/indentured and then as women. A summary of salient historical points in the text of Olive Senior's (1991) Working Miracles; Women's Lives in the Caribbean, helps to enlighten us somewhat about the urgency placed on education by the previous generation. According to her work, a formal and colonial education system dates back only to 1835, and was marked by an elitist structure that served to reinforce race and class biases in Caribbean societies. Education for the masses was a civilizing process to retain loyalties in master/servant relations on plantations and paid little attention to women, except when it was used to produce good wives and mothers according to Victorian ideals of stereotyping gender roles. As late as 1875, it was not settled by the patriarchs of the day whether women's education should be identical as men, and a system of educational inequality prevailed until the seventies. However, during the middle to late nineteenth century in phases that prioritized women by race and ethnicity, the numbers of
educated women have been on the increase (46-50). Caribbean women's historical experience of gender subordination and the struggle to secure educational provisions has become a political legacy that these Caribbean-Canadian women learnt at "home". Older women, conscious of this, emphasised its necessity in self-definition and empowerment. Perhaps, they realised that education gave more power and recognition to Whites and to men in general, so it was coveted as a means to increase the value of their activism. Having an education became in Caribbean women's thought to be a means of significant route to independence and liberation. Learning about the value of education in resistance is related to learning how issues of race, class and gender tend to disrupt the imagined success that it will bring.

Learning to resist oppressions of race and class: I use this quote to frame my discussion on race and class at home in the Caribbean.

The Dominica of my youth, is where I must say that I learnt there is racism in the Caribbean as well. Because if you were light-skinned there were more expectations of you-you could work in the bank, be a public servant. While if you were dark-skinned you would be a clerk in the store. If you were really, really bright and they couldn't keep you down, they would let you teach by teach in district schools, in elementary schools. The people who taught in the Convent seemed to be light-skinned with long, blow away hair. And there is also racism in the Caribbean-based family. Who you were, the name, the class, the economic status of your parents...that's Caribbean racism! (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

Abike's frank statement summarizes many of the views that some women discuss about race and so problematize any romantic notions of home. Yet many Caribbean women in my sample, indicate less consciousness about race and its role in the socialization process. For instance, Maya, who belonged to the same island-country, of lower middle-class background, came to consciousness about blackness only at the point of migration to Canada, as she says,
I certainly didn't have a sense of my identity in terms of being Black growing up in Dominica. I think that sense developed when I was in Canada. What helped to bring that forth was the sense of not belonging in this society (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).

Also Fern, a middle class Chinese-Caribbean, experiences consciousness of race, like Maya, only when she encountered racism in North America,

I never felt any distinction in Trinidad. There (in Seattle) the majority of Blacks lived in the middle; the Chinese in another area; and the Caucasians in another-so different from the way I knew it to be back home. We made friends because we went to the same school, or we were neighbours, for me it had nothing to do with whether we were Chinese or not. It was quite different to the way we were brought up (Interview no. 7. 6 September 1995).

Kamla, for instance, whose last name is European, claims Indian as her heritage and accounts of the erasure of her original linguistic distinction by saying: "my godparents are German. I think there is some generationally mix in my family" (Interview no. 38. 5 September 1995). She dares to make this comment because racial mixing is not always recognized as an ethnicity among Indian Caribbeans (Mohammed 1988). Another fact to be taken into account about name changes is the colonial practice arising from cultural imperialism that has been responsible for erasing non-British names. To return my focus to Kamla's story, I note that like other Indian women in the sample, there is a notion that cultural integration exists, and ethnicities are not polarized, as she continues,

I really identified with both Indians and a lot of mixed friends, or what you term "Black" today. My mother was very liberal, she never curtailed us in anyway. I related better to my mixed friends than to Indian, I never liked the Indian culture because it is too restrictive (Interview no. 38. 5 September 1995).

Or, as Sumanta also of Indian heritage says, when asked if she experienced diversity in her childhood backgrounds, replies
I couldn't characterize my family as having a single attitude. It was just a continuum of Hindus, Catholics, Muslims. My Mom and Dad married in the Hindu religions but because they needed to get jobs they officially changed their religion. That's colonialism! (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).

Strategies of resistance that these Caribbean women were learning may have heightened a sense of belonging, as the oppressed could have sought ways at times together to focus on the discriminatory effects of colonialism as opposed to their own differences. At times, however, this discrimination is directly taught as it was in this case. Rowena's mother indicates to her the significance of maintaining her colour in the social world. She is middle-class woman of Mixed race heritage who I previously quoted in reference to her social learning from a African-Caribbean "nanny". Our conversation went like this,

Y: Did you socialize with Black working class people other than S...(nanny)
Rowena: Yes, in high school
Y: Did your family have a problem with that?
Rowena: Actually no! I mean I went to a girl school...
Y: So colour was not a problem?
Rowena: Not until ah bring home a Black boy friend, me mother get vexed. She would go on about colour didn't mean anything, but it mean something to she. To my understanding, my father didn't seem to have a problem around class, he was totally different to she (Interview no. 37. 31 August 1995).

The stories from Caribbean-Canadian in my study generate ideas of how these women acquired social and political consciousness at home. Granted women in the study may have differences in their "routes to political or critical consciousness"¹⁴, all of them were for the most part socially conscious because of the impact of colonialism on their personal lives, as Radika tells us,

My earliest recollection was like living in a very secure environment and always sometimes feeling a sense of longing, even as a child, and being confused about why some people had a lot to eat and drink and some people hadn't (Interview no. 11. 31 May 1995).
However, her confusion did not stop there. She learned to understand survival in an ethnic household setting where there were, one, shifting levels of poverty produced by the abolition of indentureship; two, racial mixing of Indian and "Spanish" that she claims was responsible for internal racial discrimination; three, the missionary influence on her grandparents; and four, the tensions that are produced in land tenure issues of indentureship and that create untenable connections within families. Her story continues in her voice,

Those were long stories which cause me confusion, but a lot of my reason for going into social work started from there. For example, beggars would come to our house and we would give them money. I never wanted to see anybody crying. I was unhappy a lot and I didn't want to see anybody unhappy. So some of those things have influenced who I am today (Ibid).

In a historical sense, issues of domination produce this diversity of oppressions as well as the structure of power around race, class, gender to create the multivalence of a Caribbean identity. Yet, some Caribbean women have learned that there emerge "alternative visions of power" to self-actualize based on human values, as Collins (1990) reasons for African-American women, who do the same by not subscribing to "power based in domination" (224). Older Caribbean women showed they were persisting in make responses to challenges of race and class with strategies of independence in order to bring liberation to younger Caribbean women. Some of these women who were products of the ravages of white servitude and slavery were in contradictory positions: privilege of race and victims of class, as Roberta tells us earlier of her white grandmother carrying eggs to be sold in a plantation house. Though, crossing boundaries from a working class to a middle class was painful for Yaa, it developed in her a consciousness that resistance was inherent in the politics of poverty. She says,
My mother was in the States, my grandmother worked in a hotel, my aunt was dressmaking, and I had another aunt in England. We were dirt poor! I did the 11-plus exam and won a scholarship. In retrospect it was so funny they chose for me a school that was really beyond my reach in terms of class structure. The school was very white and middle class. The kids had access to things I didn't have. It was a struggle for me to buy textbooks. But there was a financial need for me to go to that school, and I remember how painful it was as well (Interview no. 10. 29 May 1995).

Yet in the Caribbean the collapse of race and class problematizes at times the stratification of individuals, even though the colonial polarization of race exists, to bring privileges or marginalization as the case may be. Yet there is the learning opportunity to have the power to self-define, like Lucinda, a light-skinned woman, does. One of her self- ascriptions is Black, and when I asked her to tell me why she says,

There was a struggle when I was a child. My mom, who is much fairer than I went through so much discrimination because she was poor. I know I do it consciously now to tell people I am Black, as my grandparents are Black- we are all mixed race, Irish, English...my grandmother is a Maroon! I could focus on the Spaniards, the Africans or any other of them (Interview no. 24. 24 June 1995).

She choose other ethnicities in her range in opposition to European, perhaps because of class and the experience of the oppressions of poverty that sometimes foster interculturalization with African as history showed us in Chapter III.

When I asked Marise, who also is light skinned about her childhood social learning, and the role politics had played in promoting difference between Africans and Indians, she replied,

I am trying to think of the first sense I have that there was some racial tension in my own family who were black heritage and say East Indian heritage. I am trying to think of my first knowledge of that, probably in school maybe around seven years old. I had an East Indian friend and she made some comment to be about Blacks, as she didn't want Blacks to the school (Interview no. 41. 27 September 1995).
She failed to tell in her story how that tension was resolved, but when I further asked her how she then identified herself, she replied

Well, I think obviously at that time, she saw me as light-skinned of Portuguese heritage but not of Black heritage, in that context skin colour was important, and that's why I was picked to be a friend (Ibid).

I interpret her reply to mean that she learned to choose to construct a racial identity, that would prevent loss of privilege.

Olive, in my sample, could recall "white girls standing by the school gate combing their hair and waving at boys, while black and brown skinned girls skipped relentlessly". She used that knowledge to define herself,

I went to Bishop Anstey High School, which makes me a particular brand of person. I have an innate relationship with a women in Trinidad who sound like me...who, while we have an awareness of class and colour in Trinidad, we don't have an awareness of the limitations that class and colour placed on us. But in spite of that I think, as we made our way through High School, the people who emerged as leaders were bright, articulated Black girls; either brown-skinned black; or whatever we 'High School' girls. (Interview no. 6. 1 September 1994).

I interpret her statement to mean those Caribbean women who attended High school in Trinidad and Tobago at the time, did not seem to allow oppressions of class and colour to prevent their future achievements. Out of that attitude, there is a bonding that she experiences and with which she can identify herself. I hold a similar memory of High school and similar sentiment when I reflect how the spaces that we occupied were regulated with boundaries of difference to give privilege to lighter skinned girls, yet as 'blackpeople' we persisted on defining ourselves positively.

For me, learning to resist discrimination meant working hard to move beyond the negative stereotypes of "black", and to eliminate those controlling images. I believe I was learning to dispel myths about Blacks and achieving standards set for "Black girls". I knew I was
Black, as my brown-skinned adopted siblings never let me forget that in contrast to themselves. They prescribed to the dichotomy of eurocentric aesthetics of beauty: beautiful/ugly. So they search for features in me that would remove me somewhat away from 'ugly' and warned me to avoid marrying a man of my skin colour so as to be sure my children would be an improvement. However, my adopted mother's openmindness and sense of justice counterbalanced their idea of identity as I learnt from her to resist these images, search for myself, and keep educating myself. As well, I observed she, though of light-skinned colour, appeared to have no problems associating with people regardless of race, colour or class, and I feel today I am still influenced by her teaching.

Yet, other Caribbean-Canadian women in the sample reveal in their stories a lesser level of consciousness of race, almost in denial with the oppressions that were prevalent at home. Aretha says this,

I didn't even know that being Black was not a good thing. I didn't even know I was black, I was just me. I was red! I was all kinds of other things but you see, 'black' growing up for me meant that your skin was very, very dark. My mother was a 'black' woman, my father was not a 'black' man. Black had to do with the way you looked. Now I know they are two Black people. I wasn't thinking of life in those ways at the time (Interview no. 34. 29 August 1995).

This discussion about social learning around issues of race, colour and class exposes some of the problems of identity within a womanized system of resistance. Were women taught to deconstruct racial thinking constructed by patriarchal domination? Were they victims of it? I question whether their resistance practices challenged the dominant discourse of race, that contained colonial terms of divisiveness. Or, whether in learning to survive we were allowed to play around with issues of identity and to construct bodies in racial terms. But the opposition to racism was not as overt as it was to poverty, and no
one seemed to learn about the receiver's pain from racist practices, be it all not too uncommon. The important thing about learning resistance is to know how to be empowered so as to avoid evidence of victimhood.

**Learning spirituality promotes self-empowerment.** Caribbean women reflect on home to translate their experiences in Canada, as I stated before, there is the reviewing of a 'manual' of practices and procedures to enable them to employ agency. They find items in the past that they can draw on to deal materially with the use of strategies of resistance. Yet in addition to learning the use of the practical in resistance, many of these women acknowledged that they had learned to make a connection between empowerment and spirituality. They speak with a sense of amazement at the magnitude of their commitment to redefine themselves as immigrant women, by challenging structures of domination in race, class, gender and sexuality that had pathologized them. They recognize there were many risks involved to face confrontations, but their activism had become proof of their empowerment. When they remembered home—the Caribbean of their childhood and youth—they see women in the dual role of working woman and community activist. But they observe something else as well that Lena's words describe,

> I watched my mother work hard into the night. She read the Bible when Catholics were overly forbidden to do so... While she was ironing, I used to hear saying things like "Lord, help me..." (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995).

Some of the group who recall this reflect on it as another lesson learned to help in strategizing resistance.

Modern critical and cultural studies in the academy and Caribbean women's studies have privileged reason or secular thought and as a result, 'spirituality' is rarely an object for intellectual analysis. Even among African American feminist scholars who recognize
the place of spiritual biographies in the history of the liberation of African American women, a theory on the theme has been slow in developing (Wade-Gayles 1995; Eugene 1995; Moody 1994; Peterson 1992; Houchins 1988). Some of them acknowledge that spurning of "religious persons as primitive, bovine or asinine" when in their childhood they learned otherwise was their way of their white male academic discourses to achieve status (Moody 1994:30). Others equally conscious of religious backgrounds, recognize that introducing spirituality into their works would be in dissonance with Western thinking of "dualism of the body and soul, but also elevation of the body over the soul (Wade-Gayles 1995:3). In spite of my own knowledge of the importance of spirituality in the Caribbean, I have been unable to find the notion of spirituality as an attribute of identity, addressed in Caribbean women's studies. A spiritual life is very relevant in the Caribbean context, where in general, people feel at risk: underdeveloped, undercivilized, primitive are notions that arouse feelings that life is continuously precarious. How do women survive? They bear the brunt of neocolonial economic policies, as they take responsibilities to provide sustenance to their own lives and those of their families, but how else? I have often heard their proclamations of faith that are enabling them to survive. It was not surprising to hear stories in this study that referred to spirituality and its role in agency as a component of learning at "home" learning site. The meaning of spirituality to which I refer is in Aita's definition when she says,

\[ \text{I am not a religious in the sense of practising religion, but I have a deep sense of spirituality that traces itself way, way back (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).} \]

My own story resembles these words.

\[ \text{Though my adopted mother, a very down-to-earth woman, did not set an example herself as a church going individual, I observed the times when she} \]
sought solitude reading, and she would say afterwards she was meditating. She always expressed some confidence in some being which was unknowable but which gave her courage to continue to work to survive. Yet she neither disapproved of my church activities nor ever seemed to read any Christian texts nor show any interest in church activities. While for many years I had parted ways with religious affiliation, I still searched for an intangible idea as the reason for my survival. On looking back, I now have imitated her way as I am conscious of a spiritual life without a religious affiliation. \(^6\) I believe I need it to give meaning to my hope in the future; it maintains values that are important to my well-being and my creating and sustaining relationships; and it forms the safest place for my finding inner peace.

References to their connection to prayer, and to God are contained in some of these Caribbean women’s stories to indicate that ‘spirituality’ has great significance in their strategies to survive. One woman, speaks of crises of race and gender that threatened her life, that made her ill with stress. She says her recovery was due to a reminder of her belief that her work in the community was for God.\(^7\) A few of them speak about how spirituality was a part of the socialization process, for example, Sumanta who claims there was religious mixing of Catholicism and Hinduism in her family, yielding a range of influences. She claims

\[
\text{it kind of brought everything to me and placed everything in me and help me in determining my spirituality (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).}
\]

Then there is Yaa, who also connects her family’s survival with the spirituality in the home, which she describes as one of extreme poverty. She believes spiritual beliefs has helped in empowering the women in her family. She says,

\[
\text{I think one other thing is religion, the spiritual was very important in our family. I was raised an Anglican, my grandmother was a Spiritual Baptist type of thing. I remember there was emphasis on praying. When there were hardships you resort to prayer to work through things. I remember there was emphasis on praying and thanking God for whatever came our way (Interview no. 10. 29 May 1995).}
\]
Audre Lorde (1984) makes two crucial points in her text, *Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power*, that I borrow to analyze my data: it is incorrect to separate the spiritual and the erotic; and it is false to dichotomize the political and the spiritual. First of all, she clarifies that the erotic is not the trivialized, romanticized sense of the sexual self through male dominance, and defines it as "an assertion of the lifeforce for women" (55). It is not be confused with the pornographic, when it is just the opposite. She speaks of the erotic as a deep power coming from within and manifesting itself in a variety of ways, emotionally, socially, physically and politically. How does this relate to socially produced subjects? I assert that spirituality could be considered as yet another discursive position in which subjectivity shifts. Caribbean women in the study have proof of its effects, but realize there is something inexplicable about it. For example, there has to be an explanation for Lena's ability (constituted as a Black immigrant woman") to establish and sustain an alternative theatre for eighteen years in the city of Toronto. How much does she help when she says,

I think God had something to do with it. I think he gave me strength to persevere. I think there was something inside of me that always wanted to express itself (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995).

Lorde's (1984) other assertion is to keep politics and the spiritual together. This validates the relationship between the conscience and community activism, as referred to in Rhoda Reddock's (1990) definition of Caribbean feminism, that I discussed earlier. This group of women in my study, irrespective of race, class and religion are constituted as Caribbean women by learning to have a political consciousness toward anti-subordination. They learned to be guided by consciences that caused them to act against social injustices. They are acting in resistance to domination in Canada, in spite of the
social construction of their identities that relegate them to remain within boundaries of race and class. Locked in positions as "immigrant women" it is assumed they experience being othered, victimized and inferiorized. They may even be acting 'out of place' on foreign terrain. In my sample, many women relate to the effects of their resistance as emerging from faith and hope which reside beyond the practical effects of life. Saida, for instance, in her story with folk knowledge helps to simplify the mystery of surviving against the variety of dominant systems. I probed her to tell me more about her courage and from where she thinks it came. She replies,

Oh yah! I had to courage to do it myself, because I had a goal that, you know, I just have to go forward. Don't look back if one fails, God is there to provide the next one, because he provides for the birds and the bees and he provides for me. And that's just the way I feel, so...Ideas like that come from my mother, and my grandmother too (Interview no. 17. 8 June 1995).

Hazel and Deloris in the sample, are ordained ministers of two churches respectively. Hazel is the Outreach Director of the Union United Church in Montreal who defines herself as a "strong Black woman". She spoke of her impressive career in both Canada and the Caribbean in community activism. It began in her childhood as she says, "when I was growing up, the school and the church, that was my whole life". 19 Her story was mostly about the faith she had to do missionary work along with her husband in parts of the Caribbean and then to relocate to Canada. She speaks of her belief in a spiritual life this way,

I think you have to be yourself, and have a deep faith and a deep trust in God, and that is what helps me through, because a lot of things weren't always easy and smooth flowing even when we came here to a Black congregation (Ibid).

Deloris, the other woman, is Archbishop of the National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith Diocese of Canada. Like Hazel, her activism is centred in her church, but the does
outreach to the community. Her activism began as well in the Caribbean. She tells most of her story about her responsibility in acquiring public recognition for the Spiritual Baptist in Canada. She claims it is due to her courage and her learning resistance through worship and sharing in her community in the Caribbean. She says,

I was very religious as a child I had to get up and pray at 5 o’clock every morning. My mother stayed up at nights praying...her first strength was spiritual. My Dad was a community person, so I had to get involved in the Church (Interview no. 46. 7 August 1997).

These women’s stories that blend their religious faiths with community activism I will discuss further in Chapter VII. I return to discuss another theory about spirituality.

bell hooks (1993), in *Sisters of the Yam*, highlights spirituality as a distinct feature in (Black) women’s lives from a religious life that is a historical tradition in Black communities (184). She advocates a course for Black women that puts them with their spiritual selves to release the fear about survival. Affirming this to be a truth for herself, she writes,

I have wanted to tell the truth, that I am sustained by my spiritual life, by my belief in divine spirits, what other folks often call “higher powers” (183).

Her exhortation is practical and relates much to healing and ‘self-recovery’, that is not an issue in the stories of these Caribbean women. Yet it supports some of the pronouncements like this one Lauretta made,

Humility is my family and people have become my family, but the reason I’ve been able to remain sane and healthy is because I genuinely believe in God. I believe the only reason Theatre in the Rough is around is because of God (Interview no. 21. 14 June 1995).

In the Caribbean’s history there has been legal and social persecution of religious practices, Hindu, Muslim and syncretisms, that range from prohibition to ridicule. During
colonialism, many followers of these different religions have resisted persecutions in partly similar fashion to retaliations exploitation and brutality in the plantations systems. This means that Caribbean peoples have been engaged not only in economic struggles for survival, but in struggles to maintain their spiritual lives. Consequently, I assert that spirituality is a part of the construction of these Caribbean women's subjectivities, which my study has not ignored.

CONCLUSION

When these Caribbean women in Canada 'make two ends meet' in the diaspora; or when they connect to laugh in their networks, home is the imagined construct that makes them reconstitute their subjectivities. Home is not 'four walls', as we say, it has a history of resistance to multiple oppressions: it is not unified in these Caribbean women's thoughts because they experience it in a variety of ways. They know that home is the reason they could act beyond the boundaries set for them in race, class, sexuality and gender, even though certain discourses of nation may exclude them. Home was certainly a constant site where they saw older women address issues in their communities; and where they observe the acts of resistance to survive oppressions of domination. They imagine themselves within this site called home as part of the nation learning to perpetuate resistance. I have shown through the stories these Caribbean women have told me, there are possibilities that the past can filter down to the present and construct home as a learning institution.

Caribbean women brought home with them to Canada, because they were prepared for the contestations they would face as immigrant women. Their memories of home embrace a range of experiences, from negative to positive, through which percolates strengths for resistance. They see home as a place where older women negotiated
boundaries between the private and the public. These women did establish ties with the community in social work, in teaching and in the politics of social upliftment. There is no place like home, because even when they experienced violence, home is remembered for communal sharing, and for diversity. Also it is remembered as a place where women seemed to be able to be independent enough to challenge and resist racist and patriarchal oppressions. They claim going back home, for instance, enables cultural renewal that energizes them to continue in the diaspora. For some, returning is a form of continuing education as they revisit ways in which Caribbean women in the region work to survive. As well, it keeps home in their minds as a particular reality to maintain a sense of their own security in Canada. For example, Lucinda's clear confidence about the appropriateness of revisiting, in spite of her twenty-seven years here, is in these words that she belongs to home:

I think where I was raised and where I was born the type of parent I had, gave me strength to achieve my goals in Canada. I can go home, back now, today and you can ask anybody who knows me back home, it's like I never left.  

Finally, I find that Caribbean women's stories of their learning resistance, each at different homes in the Caribbean suggest how prepared they were to address challenges that they describe occurring during their periods of adjustment. As Sastra says,

My experience of being raised in my parents' home-the subtleties of race and gender, class and religion-we came with that history to Canada.  

They learnt for a start that any consciousness of a Caribbean feminist tradition (Reddock 1990) is deeply rooted in community that cannot be divorced from self and identity. In spite of the diversity of this group in race, class and sexuality, the interconnectedness of their histories has constituted resistance as a common feature in their subjectivities. They
claim to know that home can be problematic, and even antagonistic at times, but the
diverse ways it has shown them how to survive is extremely significant to identifying
overall with a Caribbean woman's identity. They were able to survive in Canada mainly
because they have sustained a vision of community that they learnt. That vision can be
conceptualized as family, as church, or as groups of marginalized people, in whom they
feel they can make a connection in order to define identities as activists. Their experiences
in Canada to materialize and distinguish this identity is the topic of my next Chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: The home is full of strengths

2. See Appendix I for portrait of Lena.

3. In June Rollins' (1985) study she showed when African-American women working
   as domestics, felt they were objectified, gave incorrect names; appear slow-witted and
   submissive. When they played the role of most obedient person, their work was most
   valued regardless of how terrible they performed (Discussed in Patricia Hill Collins

4. Studies in the region, under the aegis of the Women in the Caribbean Project, like
   Barrow's (1986) Finding the support: a study of strategies of survival, have found women's
   economic role, though largely ignored, in the process of national development is dependent
   on women's creative energies to strategize survival.

5. This term is used in the context of the extended family and women centred
   networks to refer to those women who support and help biological mothers with child
   rearing. The meaning of "othermother" is fully explored in Patricia Hill Collins (1990)
   Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment.
   New York. London: Routledge (pp. 119-122)

6. Interview no. 16, 7 June 1995.

   of stereotypes. Cave Hill, Barbados: University of the West Indies, WICP, vol. 4.

8. There are Caribbean studies which cover women's agency to survive in the
   economies of the region with adaptive strategies. Refer to Christine Barrow (1986).

10. Saidia in the interview no. 17, spoke of her pleasant manner to strangers who seem to want to discriminate against her as she looked for work; and about her willingness to share in a communal way whatever little she had with people who were equally as destitute as she had been.

11. The Women in the Caribbean Project, a research of the eighties, concludes that Caribbean women’s lives, regardless of race, in the region were extremely difficult. They experienced the problems of vulnerability at work, and full responsibility for child care. In spite of this, a picture has emerged showing these women as "pooling resources derived from their own economic activity and redistributing them to meet familial and personal needs" (Patricia Anderson (1986) Conclusion: Women in the Caribbean. Social and Economic Studies 35(2): 291-324.

12. Interview no. 18, 7 June 1995.

13. I borrow Benedict Anderson’s (1991) definition in his Imagined Communities, London, New York: Verso, where he speaks of people not knowing in each other in particular geographical spaces, but yet each have in their minds a communal sense of together belonging in those spaces.

14. I acknowledge with thanks Sherene Razack's term which helped me greatly to formulate my idea.

15. There are several stories and jokes in which characters show how they can speak to God on a "man-to-man" basis. The societies of the Caribbean are well known for religious faiths, and a growing respect for the diversity of their practices. Technologies of communication have now increased the interest of many people in the power of prayer. In recent times, the choice of enriching one’s spiritual life on a daily basis is given through radio and television programs, along with outdoor evangelizing and youth movements.

16. I shed a religious past because of my experience of racism and sexism, and charted a journey in which I have faith in my ability to love, to work, and to create. I believe my being is sustained by my connection with the spirits of those I love, whether dead or alive. I believe in the power of art-literary pieces; meditative prose and certain songs; as well as, the beauty of untouched nature, for example, to unleash my spirit which I feel exists to energize me.


18. In her essay she speaks of the functioning of the erotic power for her in the joy she shares in her relationships; in her ability to retain a sense of self; and her conviction to
respond to her "inner voice" which requires her to do what she ought to do (56-59).


20. Some women of the sample claimed as children, diversely, they were involved in religious rituals and practices, however, adulthood and migration might be reasons why their roles in religion had changed. However, they held on to beliefs and faiths as triggers of activism.


22. Interview no. 36, 29 August 1995
CHAPTER VII

STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

We duz get troo, bonjé!\(^1\)

Research Findings

Section I

Introducing the Ethic of Independence.

The previous chapter discussed the learning experiences of Caribbean-Canadian women to show how knowledge is transferred from older women to younger ones in Caribbean societies. In this chapter, I argue that Caribbean women's power to use this culture of resistance in Canada that was passed down describes the ethic of independence. I first define my notion of independence and demonstrate the meanings that I give this concept, with quotes from these women. To help me interpret their statements, I explore themes of assertiveness, resilience and creativity. I show how these women's histories establish particular routes of survival, that are mainly linked with community. These routes, however, through which they negotiate their survival strategies sometimes are without impunity. Caribbean women's entire history of migration is fraught with encounters of racism and sexism, because many Caribbean women are subjected to several degrading images and to immense discrimination.\(^2\) Despite the resulting alienation and
degradation of their identities in the mainstream society, these women rely on networking, education and community activism as survival strategies.

It is with some repetition I emphasise that skills of resistance and the learning of them, have been produced from historical conditions of servitude, slavery and indentureship. Resistance, I believe, while it addresses the issues of daily life, goes beyond that level of the struggle and moves in a transformative direction to redefine an imagined identity that was devastated by colonialism. Colonized peoples, Edward Said (1993) notes must re-imagine themselves as free from oppression.3 For women, re-imagining takes the form of a refusal of victimhood. Words like Simone’s, embedded in both contemporary learning and the yearning for a very deep historical past, are echoed by many women in my study:

I really have never been a victim. I don’t feel like one. I never acted like one (Interview no. 23. 22 June 1995).

Although enduring racism, Simone never allows herself to feel she is a victim. Her re-imagining means an embracing of an ethic of independence, which is a notion that I will now define.

Independence in the context of Caribbean identity is not meant in the liberal sense of the freedom to pursue one’s own interests. Sherene Razack (1998) describes this liberal understanding of autonomy as based on the definition of an individual as someone who has no defining links with community.4 Instead, I mean independence to refer to an oppositional attitude in a woman who sees herself as her own agent to negotiate within boundaries set by herself and her community; and who acts reasonably within legitimate means to recover her sense of self, damaged in imperialism, patriarchy and economic exploitation.
Independence, while specifically gendered is expressed by women in my study across race, class and region because of the interconnectedness of Caribbean women's histories. Within those histories there are systems that engender in Caribbean women, by and large, a tendency to develop a "culture of resistance" (Collins 1990:18) to use creative strategies by which they and their communities could survive. Self-confidence and resilience are twinned within the ethic of independence (Collins 1990). The self-confidence to which I refer contains not only the quality required for a stage performance or for the writing of examinations where the nature of competition is a known quantity. Self-confidence also contains a strength that enables these women to deal with the unknown outcomes of major risks. Many Caribbean women in this study speak of such risks they took when, either in the Caribbean or Canada, they confronted precarious situations in their lives, or when they disrupted racist and sexist institutional practices.

Women spoke often of resisting victimization, for example, Olive, of African and European heritages, and university educated in the Caribbean, chose this route to her self-liberation.

I came to Canada because I didn't know anybody here. I came to get away from a life which had become very kind of nightmarish. And I wanted to go some where that I knew nobody and nobody knew me. I came with $300 dollars, that's all they asked for then. When I got off the plane and the man asked me my name I gave him my maiden name-nobody looked at my passport-and I went to the YWCA and registered in that name (Interview no. 6. 1 September 1994).

In addition, Olive changed her personal appearance to suggest an association with Black radical politics, and ultimately began her community activism. Despite the physical changes she made to herself, she, in a serendipitous fashion, landed on her own, her first job as a librarian.
I also attribute the use of the ethic of independence to the story of another Caribbean woman of middle class origin. Abike, of European and African heritages, faced life on her own as a young woman. Having lost her parents in her teens and influenced by nuns, she got herself organized for university in Canada.

At Mt. St. Vincent I realized I had nobody. I had nobody in Dominica, I had nobody in Halifax, Canada, so I know I had to do well, because I had to make it on my own. In the first semester, I did quite well actually. (Interview no. 13. 7 June 1995).

Similarly the use of the ethic appears in Kamla's story. She is of Indian heritage, and her story is of poverty and the constraints that caused her not to complete secondary education. Witnessing her mother's tragic end as a penalty for her use of independence in her country of origin, Kamla was determined to utilize the skills of survival she had learned at home. She too on her own sought opportunities in a foreign country to materialize the "great things" for which her own mother had strived. She recalls her reasons for migrating.

My mother died and my brother and I had to go to live with relatives. The domestic problems were unbelievable and devastating to me. So I thought my only recourse was to leave home... (Interview no. 38. 5 September 1995).

Arriving independently in Canada, she found herself in a low-paying factory job, while awaiting her landed immigrant status. Her consciousness of the economic exploitation she was experiencing there, coupled with her own ambitions caused her to pursue a job at a hospital, that she obtained after numerous trials.

The women in the study described themselves as defiant. Aita, of African heritage, tells her story of her first months of entry into Canada as a time when she saw a possibility
of herself being constituted in the labour market as a victimized woman. She chooses instead to defy the status quo:

When I came I got a job with the Government. I looked around and saw there was this pool of white women, doing the most mundane, numbing kind of work. They said they had been there for 10 to 15 years. I thought if I had to move up, I would never make it. So the first thing I did, after a short time, is to apply for another position I saw and I got it. Then I said to myself, 'I am going back to school!' (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

Other women, like Saida, who were unable to access high-school levels of education also display this self-confidence.

The guy that sent for me threw me out. And I walked all the way up and down on Dorchester looking for an apartment and I saw this couple sitting outside, and I saw 'rooms for rent' and they took me in. When I start to work I never knew anything about toilet brush, and that woman where I worked let me use my hands to wash her toilet. I didn't like that! One evening, on my way home I met a girl who worked in a nursing home. She asked me if I would like a job, and I said yes, and the next day she called me where I worked and asked me to come to see the lady. I left the housework right away, and went to this nursing home, staying for eight years (Interview no. 17. 8 June 1995).

Saida continued in nursing homes as a career until she encountered sexual harassment with an employer. Remembering that she had sewing skills, she applied and obtained a job in a drapery production factory. This was the opportunity that helped her to project a career in her economic life, even though circumstances forced her at times to return to housework.

Ariel describes the same kind of initiative:

I went to Manpower and Immigration, and I said 'Look I need a job. I have qualifications, I have skills. Please get me a job'. They sent me to do sewing by hand. Remember I don't like sewing, and they are paying 9 cents an hour! So I left there in a huff and puff, and went back to the Immigration officer and said, 'Look. I am not suited for that job'. In those days when you spoke up, you come under the Domestic Scheme, so you are risking it. Well, I had power and I used it again. They got me a job in the factory. It was a little better than making lamp shades by hand! You know, I stayed
there until early '67 when I went to work at Expo 67 (Interview no. 17. 8 June 1995).

Caribbean women in this sample indicated that they can negotiate their own survival consistently through forms of resistance, that requires re-imagining themselves as survivors. Their personal histories testify to their survival. These are the consequences of the lives of those women quoted above. Olive, no longer in library practice, has held many corporate management positions both in the Caribbean and Canada, and is currently a senior manager in the public service. Abike is a dean of a faculty and has received several national awards including the Order of Canada. Kamla upgraded her education and became a director in the hospital that was slow in recruiting her. Aita acquired university degrees and is a professor at a university. Saida developed more skills and is operating her own dressmaking business. Ariel became employed in community and social services. She acquired higher education that enabled her promotion to a leadership position in a social services agency.

I see in Caribbean women's stories their ability to challenge the ways subordination regulates their freedom, much the same way as Collins (1990) does for Black women who employ a range of strategies to challenge "the rules governing our [their] subordination" (155). These examples I now provide relate to Caribbean women's struggles to challenge institutional discriminatory practices. Many of them use to engage in these actions individually. In so doing, they risked that their protests would get in the way of their own advancement into the mainstream society. Nikki says of her experiences in the Indian Affairs Department of Ontario,

When the powers realized what Development Officers were really doing, the axe started swinging. They found all kinds of ways, across Canada, and especially in Ontario of dismissing us, but I wasn't dismissed. I let this
bureaucrat know that he paid lip service to helping people. I made the mistake, I suppose, of laying blame on him at a staff meeting. Anyway, since I knew I might be next in line to be fired, I got in touch with a contact at the Human Rights Commission since they were expanding, and I was interviewed and got the job and left Indian Affairs (Interview no. 22. 17 June 1995).

Similarly, Alice speaks of her struggles with racism and homophobia at the YWCA this way:

I ran for local President in the union—a very, very interesting experience. White women were getting up to speak against my nomination even before I was nominated. And I wasn’t sure if it was because I was Black, or they felt I was younger, or I had dreadlocks, or I was a lesbian. Anyway whatever Alice Dougherty meant to them they had to create opposition towards her. It was surprising how overt racism and homophobia was within a woman’s organization. But you know we were able to push and push and push until the whole thing erupted. They suspended me. We went to the press and the Board eventually stepped in and fired the Executive Director (Interview no. 30. 8 August 1995).

Lena similarly challenges a health institution:

In England I had been used to a professionalism and its very highest in the nursing field, and such things as bedside manners, protocol and stuff like that. I had a shock when I started work in Canada, they had removed all those barriers, and straight laces from the profession. One day I was on the neurosurgical ward, where there was this guy whose neck was broken, and spine paralyzed, so he was on a striker plane, and as such required a bit more care. So I was talking to this patient, and the staff nurse said something like, ‘why don’t you get to work’—well, I just freaked out, and began telling her all sorts of things about her not being a nurse. So they transferred me to another ward, and blacklisted me. That’s funny because that didn’t encourage me to stay in nursing, so I said to myself I will leave and go in the arts (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995).

Radika relates her setback in the workplace this way:

I had studied hard the Human Rights Code before the interview. After I went to a high powered seminar with Americans from the EEOC, I recognize the job they gave me in Canada, was classified as a clerical job, but that I could refine it to be more of a professional job. I applied a higher analysis than what was being used by other intake workers and developed a new intake process. I tried to railroad them into a decision, and kept hearing no, no, to everything I ask for. That made me more agitated to
become more of a change agent, and it is what has driven me on to what I am today (Interview no. 11, 31 May 1995).

All these stories demonstrate that there is a tenacity and fighting spirit in the activities of Caribbean women in the study, that supports this notion I am exploring of independence as an oppositional ethic. These quote above indicate that these women clearly see themselves as survivors who triumph over the market system, and the oppressions of racism, sexism and homophobia. As I discussed earlier, individualism becomes apparent when some of the women’s stories illustrate how they controlled their personal journeys.

But independence involves the desire arising from some mixture of the unconscious and conscious to be in control one’s destiny. I refer to it as an ethic because it is system of values that facilitates the motivation of these Caribbean women. Rather than be taken as "manipulated objects" these women are agents (Davies 1990:344), who choose, within limits, to reconstruct subjectivities between and within the terms of discourses of gender and patriarchy that constitute them. Zindzi, for instance, tells us how she made up her mind to make Canada her destination:

At times, I remember my mother and the reason she told me she moved from Montserrat and I think a lot of how her independent spirit influenced the choice I had made. Because my elder sister went to the University of the West Indies, I wanted to go to separate University elsewhere. I was trying to see how far I could go without familial props. I wanted to see how good I was on my own. So in a way there was a move up to my own independence that got me to come to Canada (Interview no. 9, 23 September 1994).

In Simone’s story of self-discovery in Canada, one can see the same desire for a freedom from middle class respectability and control prescribed for Caribbean women. Migrating on her own, she claims was an adventure to avoid her father’s fixed ambitions for her to pursue a respected profession:
I remember sitting with a friend and saying, 'you know what I want? I want people to know my name'! and we couldn't figure out at first, how we were going to do this. Both of us had this thing and I said let's go on TV. So she and I both made a proposal—she is a white girl—she got on TV and I got on TV. I phoned up Channel 47, and said 'would you like to have story teller?' and they said, "No!" and I said 'can't I audition' and they said "okay." And that's how I got on. I think people then got to know me (Interview no. 23. 22 June 1995).

Lucinda's story reflects also a clear sign of her self-reliance, and how she personalizes her struggles. It does not mean she is totally individualistic as I will later show. It means that she displays her a sense of responsibility and purpose.

People say to me for years, why don't go and get a job which pays. But I had a goal, a real strong goal for my self and my kids, I was the only person they had to depend on. I had to make sure I had a job and a place to go; and, I had to be busy. You see, when my husband left me, I lost a house, heavily indebted. When someone suggested I go on welfare, I said it is bad enough I am living in Metro Housing, I would feel I would die to be living on welfare! So even though the money was small, which I got at ...College. I decided when I moved out from the Housing I would buy a house, plus I wanted to see my third child finish university. I could say with perseverance and a lot of hard work, all fell into place in the process (Interview no. 26. 26 June 1995).

In Lucinda’s case her skill of independence works not only for herself but for her children, underlying the fact that independence is not only self-oriented.

At times some Caribbean women search for self-sufficiency so as to relieve themselves of excessive parental control and gendered tasks. When Ariel began her job as a pupil teacher at seventeen, she felt she was fortunate to earn money and it enabled her to "break away from that mould--all those domestic things" that were forced on her (Interview no. 15. 6 June 1995). She believes that gaining independence then enabled her to claim the right not to be domesticated, nor to subscribe to perceptions of 'woman'. Many times when these Caribbean women act from the ethic of independence they liberate themselves by being single women or parents; or by leaving dysfunctional relationships,
marital, family, or work; and/or mostly seeking wider opportunities through migration.

For example, Roberta reflects on how 'respectability' may have dominated her life in the Caribbean if she had not sought to make changes in migration:

Prior to leaving, it was just the beginning of the Black power movement—and we came into our Afros and the African styled shirts and whatnot, and countries getting political independence. But I do not think we did a lot of internal searching and valuing, because we were still obsessed with what it is to be decent. It meant you didn’t go dancing, you stayed at home and prepared yourself to be, if you were a woman, a housewife, or some women worked as teachers or nurses, some in the bank. But you didn’t talk back, you didn’t question the status quo. I saw in myself I couldn’t accept that lifestyle, that is one of the reasons why I left home. I think the way things were, gave me the impetus to search for my own identity and despite, I would say, sometimes the confusion within the family and among friends I needed to got through a kind of purging and throw off that colonial 'suppression', as I call it. It was my mom who would secretly admire me, but only when we were together; and she encouraged me-go, go, go-type of thing. Momma was a very independent woman (Interview no. 18. 7 June 1995).

Roberta, unable to openly resist the norms of womanhood set in her society, that complicated her class and economic position, opted to leave her country for Canada, where wider opportunities are imagined to be existent.

As individualistic as these narratives of assertiveness, self-sufficiency, resilience and creativity may sound, it is nonetheless evident that when these women talk about survival they understand it in terms of community. As Lauretta explains,

For me, there is independence: inner freedom even individualism. The thing is the entire creation is interdependent and interconnected, so you can never be totally independent. So I say, assertion of self within the context of the community-this is very, very, very important as a child growing up, and it became affirmed and confirmed in Black Theatre Canada of those days (Interview no. 21. 14 June 1995).

Maya illustrates how using independence meant balancing self-responsibility and maintaining community for its nurturing, and for its organizing power subsequently:
I had my sister, she and I shared, she, having come first. We were two to three years living together. I want to sort of have my own place, because she played the role of mother which is what I wanted to get away from. I found my own room, but it was close, and so on Sundays we would have dinner together, or visit a friend, for by that time we had built a network of friends (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).

Many more stories were told of Caribbean women's dependence on socializing among friends and family defined as community. This way of depending on groups serves to reduce the sense of alienation, as these women can with some regularity have parties or meet simply to talk and laugh. For instance, Kim speaks of setting up her life in Canada on her own in the early days, by maintaining three jobs, and taking care of three teenage girls. She used to look forward to Sundays to meet friends and family to have a good time with music, food and sharing "the Caribbean way" (Interview no. 8. 6 June 1996). Yet these women claim they saw the need to depend on their own abilities to struggle against race and gender oppression on an everyday basis.

The pursuit of independence, though in part sanctioned by community, can be isolating and victimizing. I use this idea as my final point. In Chapter I, I wrote of the penalty that occurs in Brand's story about Blossom, as well as in Prince's where struggles for liberation either led Black women to madness or death respectively. Now I discuss penalty that is paid by the women in this study. Though, in general Caribbean women in my study either had support within the home, or were single women without direct family interaction to their activism, some experienced the force of patriarchal control when they expressed their use of independence. Mother Del, the Archbishop of the Shouter National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith International Centre of Canada, is one whose story tells of her persistence without support:
When I started going to Bible College, doing music lessons, running programs in the community my ex-husband literally sat me down and said, 'if you move any further is either the ministry or the marriage'. We had other problems as well. I chose the ministry, I said, 'you met me with it and you won't stop me' (Interview no. 46. 7 August 1997).

Haniffa's story tells of a marriage enabling her independence to materialize, while helping her to break barriers of patriarchal dominance of parental jurisdiction:

I went for a year to university, and met my husband there. He is African, from ..., as you could see I am East Indian and no one wanted to accept that. There was difficulty for me to finish university as I had no support from and no interaction with my family. He and I got together and we decided he would finish school and I would work, but I think not finishing school was a turning point in my life. Although I did not pursue higher education, I got jobs continuously, and in each case the next job was better than the last. When we moved to Kingston, where my husband was finishing his Ph.D. I got a job organizing an African Studies Conference there, which held a lot of political meaning for me (Interview no. 4. 25 August 1994).

But what happens when Caribbean women confront prejudices that challenge their knowledge of themselves, sometimes within the Black community? Few women addressed this issue, but it is a hurdle that can be overcome with the use of independence in the response to forms of intercultural marginalization. I find this issue in Hazel’s story. She received an Honorary Doctorate from the United Theological College at the time of the interview, and I quote her addressing this issue:

A lot of things weren’t always easy and smooth flowing even when we came here to a Black congregation. It took a while for people to accept us because you are new and you bring different perspectives...So you always have to stand up for what you believe in, and if you know your faith is strong, and you know you are going on the right path, then you have to stay on the course.  

Drawing from my own story, I felt the alienation from the Black community in the sixties when I became active in publicising issues of racism in the arts. I felt it also on returning from the Caribbean in the eighties. My attempts to continue with community
activism here, met with some obstacles from within the community. I persisted with my engagement in my work, because I was strongly convinced I had a contribution to make in resistance to all forms of oppressions. This non-acceptance by one's own community as I name it, is also shared by Olive in my sample, and is attributed in part to the difficulty inherent in affirming the value of Caribbean women in the society in which they reside (Collins 1990). Could it be the reason why very few of the women in my sample have received public recognition for their activism? The commitment of Caribbean women like myself, to respond with activism to public causes, in spite of the negative attitude in any of our own communities, is a consequence of the pervasiveness of our own independence. Yet how does this ethic sustain itself?

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (1986) whose work unites African-Caribbean and African-American women as subjects, opposes a white interpretation of African enslaved women's refusal to be victimized as insubordination. Terborg-Penn interprets resistance activities as typical of an ancestral continental African heritage. She claims the presence of an "African feminist theory" that asserts that there are "perhaps two most dominant values", that is, "encouraging self-reliance through female networks and developing survival strategies" that she can trace in the historical process (4). She describes common characteristics of these values that include self-reliance; reliance on older women for guidance and support; redefining domestic and political roles for women; and female networking (5-9).

Blanca Silvestrini (1989) a Caribbean historian, notes that Caribbean women in Puerto Rico used resistance in Caribbean communities as an instrument of survival. Her work valorizes many historical acts of their resistance to economic oppressions. She
interprets their activities as a conjuncture of the personal and the political, in which skills of empowerment produce their economic independence to support their families during the early twentieth century Puerto Rico. Although neither of these works pays attention to multiple racial heritages, each supports the ethic of independence traced in my study.

In arguing that Caribbean women display an ethic of independence, I run the risk of essentializing. However, I believe that independence is culturally and historically implicated in responses to domination, which is an anti-essentializing position. Having said that, I examine in Chapter VIII the contexts in which Caribbean women experience domination in Canada to generate their use of independence in strategies to survive. What precipitated the need for strategizing survival? What were the forms of implementation, and what were the outcomes? To understand this, I must trace the histories of interrelated issues of immigration, social and economic domination that may or may not have precipitated Caribbean women's move from the Caribbean to Canada, via the United Kingdom for some. I explore some of the societal struggles against racism, sexism and homophobia in Canada that produced them as activists and educators in the following section of this chapter.
Section II

The fifties to the seventies

Caribbean Canadian women's efforts at survival. Between 1968 to 1975, 63%, that is the majority of Caribbean women in my study emigrated to Canada, while the least number, 4% entered from 1952 to 1961. To contextualize their activism, during the three periods in effect-1950 to 1966; 1967 to 1976; 1976 to 1989, I will present broadly a map that historicizes immigration and economic conditions to produce Caribbean women as migrants in Canada.

Calliste (1989; 1993) documents the struggles of the early trained nurses and nursing assistants from the Caribbean. In spite of Canada's nursing shortages in the 1950s and early 1960's, racism and sexism were apparent both in its immigration policies and the admission requirements of health care institutions. Some of the Caribbean women when they gained knowledge of the discriminatory systems to de-skill them, initiated their own strategies of resistance with the help of the Negro Citizenship Association, of Toronto and Montreal. Many of these women, having received nursing education in the Caribbean, were "indeed exceptional" with skills exceeding their Canadian counterparts (Calliste 1993:93-99). Unfortunately, as I mentioned in Chapter I documentation has yet to focus on the histories of Caribbean women who emigrated either as independents, or with spouses and relatives.

Wolseley A. Anderson (1993), however, notes there has always been the "push-pull" factor that operates in colonialism, whereby, individuals are pushed out of Third World countries, to meet the extensive needs of labour in industrialized countries like Canada (37). By the early sixties, such a flow of labour from the Caribbean to Canada
occurred. The Canadian labour market had an "insatiable demand for domestics" and this was expressed by the consistent pressure on the government both internationally and internally to bring in Caribbean domestics. The result was, a Caribbean/Canada agreement that promulgated two Domestic Schemes, and would increase the number of women who emigrated to Canada independently. In the second Scheme, women were given landed immigrant status and a one year contract. Between 1955 and 1966, 2,940 domestics came from Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean islands (Calliste 1989:140,141). However, while changes in immigration policies may have appeared to become slightly altruistic, the horrors of race and class were ever present. For instance, until the regulations were amended to delete "Asian", Indian-Caribbean women were excluded from the Scheme (141).

On the surface the Domestic Scheme appeared to be a satisfactory means of dealing with problems of unemployment in the Caribbean vs high employment in Canada, but it was widely criticised. On the one hand, it was deemed racist and sexist by interest groups such, as the Caribbean Association in Ottawa, as it regulated Caribbean women's positions in a "socially inferior role". Some Blacks even criticised it as a "form of indentured labour" (Calliste 1989: 148, 149). On the other hand, the high mobility rate out of the domestic service was disturbing to State officials who saw Caribbean women as permanent domestics, and who had vested interests in the economic and political outcome of the Scheme (Calliste 1989). What is to be understood is that many Caribbean women with their 'spirit of independence' used strategies of resistance to release themselves from domestic service work. Those who brought employable skills and a sense of self, would merely use the service as a means to an end, that was precisely my own experience as I discussed in
the Preface. Even though the criticisms were valid, the Scheme itself was enabling particularly for a number of single women who wanted to be independent. The Domestic Scheme was the vehicle to strategize resistance from structural economic conditions that produced gendered oppressions in the Caribbean. For some Caribbean women such migration was a release from increasingly grave subordinated positions. I reflect on the limits of my own opportunities then, and believe that the thought of my life taking a direction in which I could not self-actualize, would have crippled my psyche. As I will discuss later in the chapter, for some female Caribbean migrants, educational enhancement was a priority, along with financial stability. While education was for self-empowerment and a sense of autonomy, as Calliste (1989) pointed out, regular contributions to family, and indirectly to Caribbean economies, in cash and kind, were necessary ways in which Caribbean women fulfilled their family obligations.

When we focus on how many Caribbean women seized opportunities to survive we cannot ignore how their actions were driven by and simultaneously drove by a spirit of independence. Migration enable them these women to support their families and themselves. Struggles against race and gender discrimination engendered numerous skills at negotiating with immigration officials of both the migrating country and Canada, with employers, landlords, school establishments, health services. Zora, of my sample, though adequately qualified found herself in an office routine job relates,

I wasn't aware of anything then. In retrospect, I felt that file clerk position was kind of a racist selection of me to do that work because I obviously was capable of more. I mean when I took the test, he said nobody has ever gotten such a high score (Interview no. 31. 10 August 1995).

Aretha also, even with her student privilege was not denied the experience of racism that she eventually faced,
My roommate and I one summer were looking for a place, we phoned up and they said it was fine, we could get the place. I used to hear this story told by other people, but I used to think they must be crazy. Anyhow, we went up to Ava Road and the woman said to us, 'I can't rent the place to you, your people.' and I said, I don't have any people, it is just my roommate and myself here—and we talked on the phone and you said we can have this place. She got confused took our phone number. When we got back home, she called us and said she was just the landlady, and it is the people who owned the place that said so. It is only when we sat down and talked about it, we realized it was racism (Interview no. 34. 29 August 1995).

Other women told of racism in schools, as Sastra's story illustrates:

Imagine, in 1967, the principal telling me my daughter has the most disconcerting eyes, that the child focuses her eyes on her teacher and it is very disconcerting. Now, something like this and I don't know what to do! So then they taped her mouth shut in the school. Because my daughter was talkative and was telling the class about her school days in St. Lucia. So one day the child came home and she said, 'my lips hurt!' and when I asked why, she said the teacher took the tape off too hard (Interview no. 36. 29 August 1995).

Finally, there are also the stories of the labour exploitation of domestics (Calliste 1993; Macklin 1992).

Caribbean women's stories of Canada contain many strategies of resistance, consistent with their historical backgrounds. These were strategies that include humour, cultural renewal, spirituality, education, networking, and community activism. Networking and community activism form a continuum with the latter becoming central to my investigation of their survival. Thus I will present stories that demonstrate how networking as a strategy initiated friendships in private and continued in public to community activism among Caribbean women and sometimes men.

I define networking as an act of forming bonds among Caribbean men and women either to resist marginalization or to avoid the possible encroachment in their lives of individualism that marks life in metropolitan societies. Networking has historical
significance for Caribbean peoples who, as slaves and indentured migrants within plantation societies, had their real kinship ties broken. It is associated with the concept of home, where people are dependent on making family linkages with a mixture of kin, friends and neighbours, as described in Chapter V. In Canada, it is a concept that enables these Caribbean women to re-enact home as a place where one finds strength in multiple activities with various people. While in the diaspora, networking bears no apparent structure, it carries with it a reciprocal responsibility by persons participating in the network. Its purpose is also to make women and men become "aware of occupational and/or other available opportunities".11

The act of networking may have evolved as a subversive strategy of resistance, first, to the loss of lives in the harshness of slavery and indentureship, and then later on to the westernized idea of the nuclear family. Embraced as a way of life in the colonial Caribbean, women in particular, have used it to maintain a means of providing support for each other, their families and friends in circumstances that range from celebratory to needy.12 Transported to Canada, networking is among the main strategies of resistance against marginalization, and/or perhaps against losing 'home': the place that defines food, language, laughter, music and other forms of communication (Ho 1991). In the period of the early sixties, it was necessary for Bianca, whose first place of residence was the "YWCA" in Montreal, to organize networking into friendship:

I soon found out what being different was all about. So it was natural for me to be with people from different parts of the Caribbean, in the way my grandmother was from all over. I met right there in the "Y" a young woman in the cafeteria a Sunday morning. I smiled when she came walking towards me...I could see that she thought she knew me...anyway it was a woman from Tobago. We went to the Campus, and met another Black woman, Jamaican, and we hung out together, as the kids would say, and there were some guys. K....and L....moved out of the "Y", but I stayed
because my mother felt I was safe there. They found a room close by-it happened so naturally-like we had a place to cook, we took it in turns, and then the guys came, so there was a community" (Interview no. 2. 18 September 1994).

Bianca, in this instance, recreated home. The way she describes this reconstituted home also signifies that home does not only consist of oppressions, but it has positive connotations (Carby 1987). According to her story, there were two definitive counts when she discovered racism would become a reality in her life, for which she needed strategies of resistance. First, it was the racial stereotyping of her Caribbean identity that caused officials to discount her achievements as a high school student from Jamaica. Next, it was the discriminatory acts of prejudice that singled her out as not belonging to a Church she attended. Both experiences, she relates, persuaded her to appreciate her learning to network at home, and to understand how crucial it was to establish one in Canada. Her story will be amplified in Chapter VIII where I emphasise the link between networking and community activism.

Networking appears in my collective data as a powerful tool in resistance, although some women, for example Nisa did not have it. Of European, Mixed Race, and African heritages, she is among a few whose stories suggest levels of integration in Canadian society. She regrets her life in Canada was not entirely like 'home', because her husband was not a "joiner". She describes that it

always bothered me about my children, that they were brought up without close relatives, and I think it is the worst thing, it's like punishment for me (Interview no. 14. 5 June 1995).

At the time, while networking was useful to most, there was also a necessity to resist marginalization through community activism. These following stories give evidence of this.
Evelyne, of Indian heritage, makes very clear her migration to Canada was not for financial reasons. In the Caribbean, she survived ostracism from her Hindu family because they rejected her marriage to a man of Muslim faith. She also survived political persecution in Guyana because of her assumed wealth, she explains. She used to be a member of Boards and to belong to several commissions of the State in that country, while managing a business with her spouse. Her initial encounter with racism was when job seeking and being asked for 'Canadian experience'. This led her to begin volunteering. Relating this story was a nostalgic journey for her of the "good times" in which she describes her power to negotiate her skills and her identity within Canadian mainstream society. She speaks of the time as:

I did not have anything to do now, so I went to the YWCA and said I'd like to do some work. They asked 'paid or volunteer?' and I replied I didn't care. The women said 'a lot of older women think they could make a comeback'. So I pulled out my papers. She said 'Oh, what are you doing?' and I replied 'Exactly, I've gotta do something.' She then invited me to a coffee morning for nominations to the Board. I went and they introduced me and nominated me to the Board. I then joined the Women's Guild of Craft in Yorkville; and I was on the Mental Health Committee, and I began mixing, but I can't say I picked up one thing new. And I went on and did volunteer work at the Museum, where I fell in love with the Kalimba-an African instrument. When African or Black heritage history month started, J...C...invited me to be take part using this instrument. Following that I collected small instruments from around the world and did a program in the schools. I didn't ask for money—I did whenever teachers asked (Interview no. 1. 17 August 1994).

This type of activism aimed possibly at cultural integration in the early sixties was inadequate for some Caribbean women like myself, and also some men, who experienced everyday racism in housing, the workplace and in student environments.

It was an era when I lived in Canada, and experienced the mainstream society and their claims of no racism, plus the subtlety of the process often sprinkled with tokenism,
used to marginalize Caribbean people. This insecurity of rights to citizenship created a need to take the route of separation from mainstream society. Some of my story in activism offers such a specific case.

It was the fall of 1964, Austin Clarke a now famous Black and Caribbean writer in Canada, Charles Roach, lawyer and radical activist, Amba Trott, Ernest Tucker and Howard Matthews, writers; Lennox Brown, playwright, Salome Bey, a jazz singer and Romain Pitt, lawyer, met with me in my apartment in Toronto to consider alternative strategies to resist the frequent discrimination artists of colour experienced in mainstream society. There was a consensus to form a organization named Ebo Society, excluding white people in management, with an emphasis on exposing the artistic talents of our people. Each of us made a $25 contribution to the Society to help defray costs. We rejected naming ourselves Negro, Coloured or Black, so we chose Ebo after a proud African tribe in Nigeria. My apartment, my home became the weekly meeting place of this group; and I served in more than one capacity as Secretary. During the year 1965 we were able to produce bi-monthly a newsletter Ebo Voice, that I edited and published with the help of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. We also staged a Canada Council award winning play of Lennox Brown at the ROM, that I produced, together with poetry reading. And we felt we had excelled when we curated a collection of 18 artists from African Canadian and Caribbean people across Canada at the Fine Art Gallery, Toronto Public Library for a month. We continued our resistance to the marginalization when we organized a reception in November to honour the works of Lennox Brown, Austin Clarke and Wallace Collins, having only received $25.00 from one publisher. On the whole, we considered our year’s work as a vindication for the misrepresentation of our identities as Caribbean and Black people.

There were other Caribbean women whose agendas in community activism had been similar to my own. One of these women was Abike. I discussed her story earlier in the chapter, describing how she had different locations of home in the Caribbean. One particular location, the estate of her parents, became the site for the birth of her strong social consciousness. She claims that this caused her to leave her assets to her brother, and in so doing, show how much she rejected the continued inequities in a colonial management of a plantation economy in the twentieth century. She came to attend university in Canada. She identifies her activism this way:
When I left Mt St. Vincent and came to Montreal, that is when I became more fully involved with the Black community. I was involved long before 'Black was beautiful' to the extent that my brother once sent me a message indicating when I come to my senses I will be welcomed back home. I was co-founder of the National Black Coalition. I worked with the Negro Citizenship Association in the late fifties, when we tried to integrate the Diamond and the Lasalle taxi industry. I went with Black groups to Quebec City, when we were asking the province for Human Rights legislation. I participated in demonstrations for opportunities to rent houses, in employment. I went regularly to Toronto to participate in Liberation day marches, taking my children and their friends, and renting a suite at the Royal York Hotel. I can't tell you how many times I became the first Black female to do x, y or z. For instance I was the first Black female in Quebec on the Immigration and Refugee Board and so on (Interview no. 13. 7 June 1995).

Thus community activism, as these stories exemplify, were Caribbean woman-driven though not woman-centred, and they are reflective of learning resistance at home where the link between the private and the public has to be retained. Also, the tracing of those stories establishes the simultaneity and continuity of Caribbean women's efforts in the struggle against racism in Canada. For instance, Winks (1971) records that in 1965, two newsletters related to Black "Negro" identity emerged: the Expression a "quarterly" of the Negro Citizenship Association in Montreal; and Ebo Voice an "occasional publication" of Ebo Society in Toronto both of these activities engaged Abike and myself respectively. He states that files of these papers are now lodged at Yale University Library (404,405). I have framed Caribbean activism in the period, 1950 to 1967, to suggest a beginning dealing only with data of my own research. Yet I am mindful of all the many events that may be recorded or have gone unrecorded and can make a larger impression on the period, that my work is unable to embrace. I will now move on to phase 2, that is, post1967 to the mid-seventies.
The post1967 and the seventies: changes in the State: In 1967, Canada made various significant changes to the Immigration Act that made the Domestic scheme for Caribbean women redundant (Agnew 1996; Macklin 1992). These new regulations allowed women to come to Canada, secure a job and apply for landed immigrant status here. Canada again benefitted by these policies because Caribbean women, whose skills were produced in the sending countries, could be made to return "home", when their labour was exhausted (Macklin 1992:961). Domestic service workers were threatened by an irreparable damage to self-esteem if the State repatriated them to poverty. Another change was the introduction of the "points system" that emphasized educational qualifications and skills. This new criteria was to match the change in Canada's economy where the unskilled worker was no longer much needed because mechanization of industries demanded more people from the managerial to clerical class (Das Gupta 1994).

However, 1967 to 1970 saw an increase in the number of Caribbean immigrants to Canada, that is approximately 33,000 people. This was the period in which the majority of women in my study emigrated. The demographic pattern of immigration was, for example, in 1967 alone, 56.8% that is, 4,772 were women of whom 3,680 were between the ages of 20 and 64 (Anderson 1993:77). Lloyd Brown (1984) traces this change to these factors: the reformed immigration regulations from 'preferred countries of origin' to individual qualifications, removing the racist stigma; the closing of doors in the 'mother country', Great Britain; and, the rising racism there together with a declining economy made Caribbean people come to Canada. It was a Canada that had attained a "positive image" in the minds of these people (61).
In the 1974-1978 period, Canada experienced, like other industrialized countries, unfavourable developments from the world-wide oil crisis, and progressive birth-rate decline. In 1978 the revised immigration legislation was proclaimed that moved from the criteria of educational achievements to occupational experience, specifying three classes of immigrants-family, independents and refugees. More or less since 1967, Caribbean migrants used the family class as a tradition, but confusion over specificity within that class, created a problem for them and added to a decline in migration (Anderson 1993:42-45). However, the severity of racist practices by Canadian officials in the exercise of the State's immigration policies, is best summarized in these words by Rosemary Brown (1989):

But my feelings about landlords and landladies paled in comparison to those I had about another group of people. My nightmares were filled with immigration officers. I hated and feared them because, unlike, landladies and landlords, they had my fate and future in their hands. They had power. I thought they were stupid and cruel-petty despots who made no attempt to conceal their loathing for Black immigrants and whose sadism was uncontrolled when dealing with us (31).16

While such events might continue to be a priority in the minds of migrant women and men, oppositional thought found in Canadian feminism had not still addressed the issue of race as my next Chapter VIII will discuss. However, Caribbean women affected by their learning resistance that includes a specific mandate for education strategized accordingly.

Caribbean women used education as a strategy to survive in the midsixties and seventies. These women in my sample remember with fascination the messages that Caribbean older women sent particularly when they described themselves as educationally deprived. These older women showed there was a struggle with the contradiction of resisting white domination and yet adopting cultural white customs as a means of
liberation, that included how they tried to empower themselves through self-learning. I wrote earlier of my experience of my Aunt Georgie’s urgency for self-learning. Aita’s story is somewhat similar as she relates how she observed her mother who "picked up every piece of information that she could get from the white folks in terms of dress" and how consistent she was in reading the "Reader’s Digest" (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995). Added to that, Aita relates, despite her lack of formal education she was their tutor for homework, so that she instilled in herself and her siblings that education was essential: they had to obtain diplomas (Ibid.). But education for either Aita or Maya, as other of the women in the sample, moved beyond "getting a piece of paper", from a university that they did obtain. It was learning critical consciousness that progressed in the eighties into an activism of revolutionary politics among Black women and men, as Aita says, 

In the seventies, the first study group that began in this city, that I know of, was with Franklyn Harvey, who brought us the New Jewel Movement. It begins with Caribbean politics, including Walter Rodney’s writing which gave me a grounding. It was the first time I hear of slavery and indentureship...The second influence in my life is the Black Study Group, comprising of twelve of us, some younger than I. This focus was PanAfricanism. It enabled us to understand where colonialism fits into the struggle, and our link to Africa. These events made up the ground work for community organizing. Everything in my professional or community work I do today takes me back to that study group (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

Maya remembers, 

... doing courses at the University of Toronto, and to talk about issues like apartheid was taboo, just as much as talking about racism was taboo, even then it was worse. To me, these were the kind of issues that were impacting on my life every day and I couldn’t talk about them. So that gave me an avenue to find a discourse that would give a kind of support for my survival in Canada. I used to meet in study circles. We had a study group that was the most, in terms of my own personal development, effective. We would read books, discuss and draw from the strengths of those great names, Malcolm X and others. That was able to ground me and make me feel more centred, so that when I was experiencing racism, it was not as damaging...
psychologically as if I had not been grounded (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995). 19

For some of these Caribbean women, the early seventies was a period in their lives to resuscitate their longings that would keep them continuously on the track of independence. Ariel, of Mixed race and African heritages, a single mother, who went on welfare because of ill-health during pregnancy, and who after getting off welfare did a mixture of paid and voluntary work in a Montreal Black community agency, notes,

But there was all this nagging. I still had to raise my boy and I still had to go to school and I couldn't do both together. And there I was 42, my life came crashing down. I developed very bad asthma. When my asthma became under control, and when my son graduated, I then applied to Concordia and McGill and got accepted at both (Interview no. 15. 6 June 1995).

Other women like Anne and Yaa of African heritage, achieved higher education, and moved to positions of authority. From these locations they could initiate and establish liberal reforms in the organizations' practices of both hiring and servicing clients, and as well, institute training programs about cultural sensitivity in terms of race and ethnicity. 20 Patricia Hill Collins' (1990) theory on the experiences of African-American women, is reflected in these cases, when she says,

Drawing on the model of education as empowerment, Black women routinely reject models of authority based on hierarchical relations. 21

Though in the Caribbean, social and occupational stratification may have some relation to race, colour, and ethnicity (Ryan 1991; Gordon 1987) the concern about education is generally constant in all categories. Fern, a fourth generation Chinese Caribbean, lived first in Seattle, Washington before settling in Canada. She recalls how she fell back on her parents' perspective that education was very important to her when she experienced both racism and sexism at the workplace,
I picked up the way people looked at you, the way they talked to you, the way they fathered you, so that motivated me to break the barriers of a woman educationally. I went to school and got several degrees, in business, as well as in banking and finance (Interview no. 7. 6 September 1994).

Yet, in resistance to racism, education as a strategy does not stop at the self, it takes on the educating of others about racism, as Yaa, Afro-Caribbean says,

I was working in the assaulted women and children's advocacy Counsellor program, a two year program to train women for jobs in shelters and rape crisis centres. Just the nature of the course I was teaching, was one way of resisting. I taught (White) women race and class, intercultural communication bringing a lot of Afro-centric and other perspectives into it. me, that was one way to challenge, if not undermine dominance (Interview no. 10. 29 May 1995).

Yaa, in spite of her many teaching programs and culturally-sensitive activities, professional white women's discriminatory practices in institutions to marginalized minority women were not greatly reduced. Zindzi, Afro-Caribbean, however, in her efforts to provide anti-racism education, depended on the solidarity of one White woman, whom she said,

was interested in my (community) work and knew where a lot of money was ... so she would set up these speaking engagements for me and then people would pay me, people like the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (Interview no. 9. 23 September 1994).

However, a more substantial initiative was her involvement in the establishment of the first cross-cultural centre in London, that has spread to several other cities including Toronto. It was an attempt to confront racism with information and education. Zindzi tell us about it,

Another thing that took up a big piece of my time was what was then known as 'international education', and development education; and the first cross-cultural centre in Canada, of which I was a part of starting. It became a major vehicle to address social issues (Interview no. 9. 23 September 1994).
The above stories though focused on education clearly anticipates the more extensive social change activities of the 1970s. There were staggering increases in the numbers of Caribbean immigrants entering Canada, after 1972 when the numbers were 50% more than they were in 1967. (An average 20,000 a year over the period 1973 to 1978 entered Canada (Anderson 1993: 60-61)). A climate of intolerance over what would be later referred to as the "Canadian mosaic" resulted in migrants' experiences of prejudice and alienation in social and cultural services in institutions. During the same period, however, there was in Black America the residual consciousness of Black Power, that gave support to the African Liberation movement. This had an effect on the growing militancy of Black people in Canada and in the Caribbean. A movement began to converge around two streams: the Sir George Williams (Concordia) affair in Montreal; and the African Liberation Movement in Toronto. The racism on the Canadian scene produced initiatives carried out by Caribbean women and men who established community organizations and projects, such as in Toronto, the Library of Black People's Theatre; The Home Service Association; The Black Education Project; the Harriet Tubman Centre to which several members in my sample referred.

The Black Education Project was frequently in the stories of women from Toronto as a place where there activism got started. It was established because "West Indian" parents in the community wanted to ensure their children were not overlooked and "understreamed" in the Toronto's school systems. While most programs where held at its city location, it created a space to combine the private with the public as teachers also went to the homes of children who found difficulty getting there. Though "women's issues"
were not on its agenda, "it involved mainly women from the Caribbean" (Das Gupta 1986:18). Rebeka recalls,

a lot of impetus came from Black students at U of T, who got their students Union to give a grant for a couple of years, and Black students from York got heavily involved as volunteers (Interview no. 43. 11 December 1995).

I summarise the description of it from Rebeka, who was a co-founder of the Black Education Project and who worked in it for three years. She says it operated after school weekday tutoring for Black kids, particularly in the Alexander Park area; and a Saturday cultural class in crafts, dance, and drama. Volunteers, women and men, served on an each-one-teach-one basis. They also networked around the pressing issues of the time: racism, immigration, and education. Then there was a summer program that took the children to Buxton, Ontario, a historic village where emancipated Africans settled in the late nineteenth century. It was a project that marked a very important milestone in the history of the movement to record the progress of strategies as resistance, as Rebeka continues to tell the story,

This movement with the BEP (Black Education Project) precipitated the Transitional program at York University for one year, and then the University of Toronto took it on and it was established (Interview no. 43. 11 December 1995).

One past volunteer-tutor was Zora, who at the time was a University of Toronto undergraduate who relates:

A man from Guyana introduced me to BEP. They needed people to come and tutor kids, you know, who had come up from the Caribbean and needed help. So I found the place and started tutoring twice a week, in the evenings after school. I had students who would come on their own, and leave by seven o'clock to go home (Interview no. 31. 10 August 1995).

Some Caribbean women's consciousness of oppressions went beyond their prescribed communities of Black or Caribbean to include their oppressions of race with
those of other marginalized groups. One of these women spoke of her activism in resistance to unfair rental practices at an apartment building complex in Toronto. Prompted by a local politician’s call to address this, she says,

That was very interesting for me. I took on that stuff, really took it on, in hours and hours of meetings. What I saw was a building full of immigrants-Chinese, Latin American and so on. We were doing everything in English, so we got a core group of people every time. People were reluctant to do something about these differences, for example, women who could not make decisions, they had to wait until their partners got home etc. It got to a point where I would not send out any flyers unless they were translated in Chinese, Greek, Spanish and other languages. I wanted to build an opportunity for all the tenants to band together and bring what is called a class action suit. The tenants feared for my safety, as apparently the landlord had a reputation which could have been a serious threat. It was a lot of work, and I was working fulltime as well. But successfully we formed a Tenants’ Association and went on to do some amazing things, like we got the rent increase back to 7% when it was put up to 19% (Interview no. 45. 16 September 1996).

In Montreal, the frequently remembered organizations were The Negro Community Centre, and the United Negro Improvement Association for providing the opportunity for activism to challenge racism in the society. These were spaces that Caribbean people carved for themselves to resist inequities, to feel a sense of belonging through those groups, and to embrace Canadian born Blacks who were recognizing the issues of racism as well. These extracts of women’ stories give some idea of what occurred in the seventies.

Maya:

I came in 1968 and started getting involved in 1970. First of all, in the Library of Black People’s Literature and the Home Service Association on Bathurst Street, Toronto. As a student on the U of T campus, there was a Black Students’ Association to which I used to belong. From there we used to have links with the community in terms of activities, and for trying to organize around various issues. The whole issue of immigration was a really a hot one in the seventies. That is how I became involved and found a sense of belonging, you know, in those groups (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).
Zindzi:

I lived in London at the home of a United Church minister, and again I got involved, like home, with the church. In 1970 the Caribbean community there was relatively small and everybody knew everybody else. The way I connected most with that community was through summer programs and activities for Black children. We got local initiatives, like grants from all those 1970 literacy programs, for example, Work for Youth. I then joined other Caribbean students to assist Caribbean youths outside the University (Interview no. 9. 23 September 1994).

Olive:

I started by making connections with J...K... and D...G..., who had just started the Harriet Tubman Centre, setting it up as part of the YWCA. That involvement really helped me to hold on to my life. We started to deal with issues of control there, that kind of thing, and that got my juices flying again. Just the way I used to be in High School, always fighting authority... (Interview no. 6. 1 September 1994).

Many Caribbean women in the period of the seventies used many strategies to reform public policy and to support a social movement among Caribbean and Black people to address the discrimination that was apparent in Canadian society. However, the advocacy work done by these women in international politics of Africa liberation, was the springboard to their leadership in many other areas in the eighties. These are two of the stories,

Abena:

I remember that 1971 to 1972, they brought Angela Davis here, and Baraka came, that's when I met people like Rosie Douglas-the Black Urban Alliance and others coming from the States. That was my introduction to the Black community and African Liberation Day and involvement in 1972. Most of the revolutionaries who came up from the US would end up at my house, and would have to buy all the food, cook etc. and do all the propaganda work for the NPLA. I paid for very expensive posters out of my money. I sent money to the Black Panther movement. I was supporting NJAC in Trinidad. I was giving money to the UJ movement, the Angola situation, doing fundraising etc. I was totally and completely involved (Interview no. 29. 11 July 1995).
Annzinga:

I was the Secretary of the *African Liberation Support Committee*, which was a Toronto based support group for the liberation struggles in South Africa. I was involved in fundraising and did things like bring speakers from the States for public education. In addition, we had encounters with the cops, and I saw people arrested, pushed, and I heard many derogatory comments made of us (Interview no. 45. 16 September 1996).

Some of the Caribbean women activists, like Abike used to travel from Montreal and bring her children annually to take part in the demonstrations that were held on African Liberation Day. It was the peak moment, when these women felt inspired with their purpose to focus on efforts that could transform hegemonic institutions that oppressed Black peoples all over the world.

Some of these Caribbean women engaged in the Black movement, express their consciousness about a conflict between presumed gender equality and their subordinated positions in the movement. This is how Rebeka claims her feelings.

I was becoming more conscious of being in the background, being a woman, doing the 'shit' jobs-the maintenance work-while the man is in the frontline receiving the glory or whatever. In those years I started thinking more consciously about feminism, in terms of what it meant to be a woman, and what roles and responsibilities I should take on. There were women around like...from whom I learnt a lot about the struggle around women's role. We had a lot of rich discussion, as then, we weren't talking about gender, we were saying 'women and men'. It was a real struggle as men in the movement here were saying what others elsewhere were saying, that is, 'keep quiet, first we must win the revolution, then we will move on to you, we are not the enemy, capitalism is the enemy'. We as women, said 'no, the same way we can say racism is the product of capitalism, we are not going to wait to defeat capitalism to defeat racism. We mean liberation of women is a priority (Interview no. 43. 11 December 1995).

For many Caribbean women in the movement, the Black community was a site of gendered oppressions. Motivated to engage in resistance activities with men and to trust them because of the connected colonial history, they saw on this terrain their identities still
objectified and their worth continued to be devalued. Yet some of them like Hedy in Montreal exhibited forms of courage to resist sexism found in community organizations,

My kind of involvement in the community activities started when I was about 18. In the early seventies— it came soon after the incident at Sir George Williams [now Concordia] it was a turning point for me. We in the Black community began to mobilize. I started to attend meetings at the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), because a lot of students supported those charged. Since that time I haven’t stopped. Then I was involved in one group which on considering I made a contribution. It was Barbados House Mihine. I was President for 2 years. It was important to show members that a female could really head that type of an organization. Concretely males dominated the Executive Committee of many organizations. I often had to stretch myself to attend meetings which would go on till midnight and often called at the last minute. But I did! (Interview no. 12. 7 June 1995).

Not all of the women in the sample were active on issues that involved liberation from race oppressions found in local and international politics. Some whose social consciousness was differently focused, acted the way Simone said she did,

I remember in my first couple years I didn’t know very many people in the Black community at all. I think I did some teaching with kids in a Black project. But I wanted to be a volunteer, so I went to the Central Volunteer Registry, and they sent me to the Central Neighbourhood House to support mothers who had gone to some course. They gave me one white kid and the mother was furious (Interview no. 23. 22 June 1995).

Also like Sastra,

I tried to volunteer. I called the "Y" because I saw an ad, and I asked, how could I become involved? Then this lady came to my house, and said, 'would you like to get three other women and start a group?' I found three women in the park and asked them. I was really lonely and wanted to connect, yet no one was trying to connect with me. I did not know that at the time all this was coming from my heritage of trusting and wanting to make my way in the world. I eventually served on the board of the "Y" for seventeen years (Interview no. 36. 29 August 1995).

Others like women in the Caribbean Chinese community experienced how difference marginalized them as a group. They saw the need to respond to issues induced
by the seventies' immigration policies through their involvement in the *Caribbean Chinese Association of Toronto*. Although this was mainly for social and cultural activities their support of the needy migrant bordered on the political. Two women of this heritage, Fern and Kim, became active in this community organization on their arrival in Canada in the late seventies. As Kim puts it,

> It was the time when there was a need for us to get together to give each other moral support, and to pass on information, so when you come to the country you know that you have some rights too-ways to get through the bureaucratic tape; and to help each other also financially, because we had people who went through some hard times (Interview no. 8. 6 September 1995).

Among of the Indian-Caribbean women in the sample who arrived in the seventies, one of them, Cheryl, went directly to university and began activism there. Her early community work was among Native and White women in a northern Ontario town. Her comments were,

> When I came here at the first opportunity I got involved. I found a lot of women's groups. People were ghettoizing themselves, and saying we have to belong to this and belong to that, and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to be seen to be a Canadian-a citizen of this country. I got myself a weekend job and it was looking after alcoholic and retarded women. I was involved in giving advice and helping these women in my own little way (Interview no. 3. 22 August 1994).

Finally, with Yelena, a lesbian woman of mixed race, East Indian, Chinese, Portuguese heritage, there was a similar urgency to get involved on arrival. She seized the opportunity after coming out as a lesbian to initiate her activism this way.

> I just immersed myself on the lesbian scene in Toronto. One night I was on the phone line at LOOT and woman called and said she was kicked out from home, and she asked me if I was from the West Indies, and I said "Yes" and she came to the house and it turned out that her parents were from Barbados. And after her another women turned up from Jamaica, and another from St. Lucia and we formed a little group who used to 'lime'
together in the lesbian bars, so way back then we had this Caribbean woman's thing! (Interview no. 28. 29 June 1995).

But community activism in the seventies was not only confined to the struggle against racism that Caribbean communities experienced. An example of a different setting came from Nikki, who worked as a Development Officer with the Ontario Ministry of Indian Affairs:

Now with the Native people, I was tested and tested for a long time, especially by the Chiefs—they would run me ragged, to see my reaction to what they were saying. I guess I must have passed the test, because they began to understand I was there to help them to empower themselves. So we had a lot of workshops with women and men. I worked quite closely with them, and they saw I was from a group of people that was oppressed, although not as oppressed as they were, but there was some affinity. I didn’t have any real problems of adapting. I learnt a lot about their culture, and remained there for two years (Interview no. 22. 17 June 1995).

Also there is Abike’s story,

I received the Order of Canada, for my contribution to First Nations education. That’s a little story where I was by myself a coordinator. Having got a call for graduates in special care counselling to work on a Reserve, I questioned why people there didn’t fill that role themselves. When the difficulties were described to me, I got permission from Vanier College, and delivered the program on the Reserve, volunteering myself and worked for three years. After one year, I was able to recruit others to help with other courses. You see, I had started the Special Care Counselling program at Vanier with G…and developed the curriculum and department, everything. To make a long story short, this distance program I undertook, resulted in the first ever graduation of First Nations peoples on a Reserve in Canada (Interview no. 13. 7 June 1995).

While these stories most likely indicate the privileged positions Caribbean women held relative to the subordination of aboriginal people, they demonstrate that community activism was not essentialized in blackness/racism. I heard these women speak as much of their preparedness to act according to conscience as was displayed for other sites of struggle with which they imagined themselves fully compatible. In this period of
adjustment, Caribbean women utilized strategies of resistance-education; networking; community activism-to form an ideological basis for the eighties from which Caribbean women could validate their identities as survivors, not victims.

**The eighties.** There was a drop in Caribbean migrating to Canada in the early eighties. As Anderson (1993) puts it, this was due to the shift in emphasis in the regulations from family class to independents and refugees.\(^{27}\) Caribbean people had depended heavily on the use of the family class for migration purposes. Das Gupta (1994) provides another reason. In 1982, there was the "Canadian First" program, that required by State definition people with "essential skills", and those who had capital for investments (62). Caribbean peoples were less likely to enter under these two categories. Nevertheless, by 1986, when Canada made another shift in immigration policy, there was a significant increase. That is the number of Caribbean immigrants rose from 9,639 in 1980 and 9,836 in 1983 to 12,820 in 1986 and 14,099 in 1989. Over a ten year period, 1967 to 1987, the bulk number of female Caribbean immigrants, between the ages of 20 and 64, arriving in Canada was 27,722, with highest number 9,775 in 1974 (76,77). Anderson (1993) suggests that even when the shifts stressed training and entrepreneurial skills, Caribbean people invariably were able to meet the points system as long as it was applied without discrimination (59-65). I suggest for Caribbean women, the quantities that were highest in that age group meant the importation of employable skills either to be placed in low-paying jobs (Ng 1981; Ng and Estable 1987), or to find for themselves opportunities for educational achievement, and in some cases for both.
When Canada in 1988 introduced multiculturalism legislation and policies, racial tensions were not greatly reduced. According to Fleras and Elliott (1992),

Multiculturalism as official policy originated in part because of challenges posed by the influx of ethnically and racially diverse immigrants into Canada. Multiculturalism sought to anticipate the challenges of diversity by securing an accommodative symbolic and social order (25).

In other words, legislation and policies were put in place so that Canada and its immigrant would be able to celebrate their differences, and to develop pride in the ethnic diversity that construct the Canadian society. While the overall policy was to encourage ideas of a multicultural heritage that stresses culture, there was some assumption that members of ethnic groups will participate in the dominant social, political, cultural and economic life. Multiculturalism, however, became associated mainly with government sponsorships of conferences, festivals and related cultural activities to mark heritages distinctly. Generally speaking, multiculturalism policies at both the federal and provincial level demonstrated the commitment of the State to equal access and participation to Canadian life regardless of race or culture (Gabriel 1996: Elliott and Fleras 1990).

If multiculturalism was intended to insulate Caribbean women and other migrants from the pain of inequality within the interlocking systems of race, class, gender and sexual orientation, it did not work. The racializing and stereotyping of immigrant women identity prevailed particularly in the labour force (Gabriel 1996; Ng 1988; Ng and Estable 1987). The climate that would generate a semblance of national unity only served to trigger resistance among a fast developing multi-racial society, with distinct barriers to many forms of entitlement as immigrant communities. Yet it was the period when the State machinery responded with funding to advocacy groups, mainly from the pressure of communities of immigrant women (Agnew 1996; Gabriel 1996). It was also an era when
labour unions championed the cause of the "right to equal pay for equal work" and the Ontario Liberal government, on the one hand, introduced Pay Equity legislation 1987. Yet, this government bypassed the significance of employment equity, having not been swayed by the passing of the federal Government's Employment Equity Act in 1986. Pay equity in Ontario was only a partial gain for gender equality in the Canadian women's movement. Caribbean women and other visible minority women were extremely concerned about issues of race as it influenced their lives in their communities. Finally, the climate of the eighties generated ambivalent responses from both the State and Canadian feminism in recognition of the presence of Caribbean women's issues. These Caribbean women in my study speak of being unable to tolerate the waiting for recognition of racism as an issue on the agenda of the mainstream women's movement in order for it to be articulated directly to the State. Thus a collective ethic of independence among many Caribbean women in Canada manifested itself in their feminist organizing. I name this organizing, an alternative women's movement, and I will address in Chapter VIII.

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: We have resisted and succeeded, good God!
3. Culture and imperialism. (pp. 253-254).
4. Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms. (pp. 24-25),
6. Hazel uses "we" because she forms part of a husband/wife ministerial team in the Union United Church. With her husband they both started pastoral work in Jamaica (Interview no. 16. 7 June 1995).
7. On the total of 982 trained nurses migrating from the Caribbean between 1954 and 1965, 166 was the largest number in the year of 1962. During the same period the total of nursing assistants was 286 of which 50 was the largest number entered in 1991. Agnes Calliste (1993). Women of Exceptional Merit; Immigration of Caribbean Nurses to Canada. Can. J. Women & Law. v. 6: 85-102.

8. According to Calliste (1989) Canadian women visiting the Caribbean were anxious to help women whom they met there find opportunities in Canada; and who themselves were caught up in the country postwar affluence and its women entering the labour force.

9. A case of Narine-Singh challenged racial provision in immigration regulations before the Supreme Court of Canada in 1955. The family was deported to Trinidad "because people of South Asian origin could not be admitted to Canada unless they were sponsored by close relatives." (141). Agnes Calliste (1989). Canada's Immigration Policy and Domestics from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme. In Jesse Vorst et al. Race. Class. Gender: Bonds and Barriers. (pp. 133-165)

10. While I remained for 11 months, among a small network of friends I made at that time, the majority of Caribbean women, left the service in three to six months time for jobs in hospitals, insurance companies, and other entry-level positions elsewhere. Among them were two of my still closest friends, whose rooms outside, became a home for me on many occasions.


13. The Toronto Telegram a defunct newspaper, presented the case of Ebo Society in the last of its series of articles examining the changing role of the society. I was quoted as saying: "After a generation, a European immigrant is no longer an immigrant. He is Canadian. His skin is white. A Negro is always a Negro. His skin is black. A Negro can't become like everyone else. He doesn't want to. He just wants people to accept him as he is, and they won't." Telegram Monday August 16, 1965. p. 9. Thirty-two years later, there is still need for a claim to identity, and I am empowered to theorize about it in this dissertation.


15. Details of the Negro Citizenship Association are well presented in Donald Moore (1986). Don Moore: an Autobiography. Toronto: Williams-Wallace. It was founded in
1951 out of the continual appeals of "Negro" people who had experienced "untold indignities and hardships" in their attempts to be legally admitted to Canada (108). Mr Moore, who lived to the age of 102, was extremely active in organizing social services for Caribbean women from the Domestic Scheme, and established a Centre on Cecil Street, at which I did my first brief volunteer job facilitating workshops for Caribbean women in consciousness raising in 1959.


17. Aita's words (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

18. The New Jewel Movement had roots in Trinidad and Tobago in the seventies, and other parts of the Caribbean. I was a member of one group and we engaged in critical work emerging from organized discussion, while very few people wrote texts. As an example of the thought at the time see Franklyn Harvey (1974). *Rise and Fall of Party Politics in Trinidad and Tobago*. Toronto: New Beginning Movement.

19. I note with proud interest a part of this story, as I too had been actively connected with the New Jewel movement in Trinidad and Tobago in the seventies, the founder of which was the same man.

   (Yaa). Interview no. 10. 29 June 1995.


22. A study done by Dr. Wilson A. Head (1975), entitled *The Black Presence in the Canadian Mosaic: a Study of Perception and the Practice of Discrimination against Blacks in Metropolitan Toronto*, and published by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Broadly speaking it found Blacks struggled in groups to resist discrimination in housing, education and employment situations. The respondents in the research sample were placed two generation categories: older and younger. The younger generation worked in activist type organizations, like the Black Education Project, who are represented in my sample; while older persons worked at securing change in legislation affecting racist practices. The Act which created the Ontario Human Rights Commission was sited as an example. This report explored the incidents of discrimination which indicated the rising levels of prejudice at the time. As a result it provided many recommendations for changes to be made by the State with regard to schools, the media, the police and other community service organizations in the mainstream. However, it also directed a few recommendations to the Black community, which included the development of an umbrella organization to monitor vigilantly and publicize all aspects of discriminatory practices which affected members of this community.

23. The Sir George Williams affair though not yet scholarly documented was the response of revolt by Caribbean and Black students to discriminatory practices in that University, now renamed Concordia. The African Liberation Movement was comprised
of support efforts throughout North America by Blacks and expressed itself in rallies and educational programs.

24. Standard research Canadian news and periodical indexes of the 1970s had no listing of articles related to these community projects. I refer to them on the basis of the knowledge which women in my sample passed on to me because of their involvement in activities produced by these organizations.

25. Taken from the brochure. *Black Education Project: an Introduction, a Free Community Service.* n.d.

26. Lesbian Organization of Toronto.

27. While the Act was to have affirmed some fundamental objectives in Canadian immigration law, such as family reunion (Hawkins 1991:70), but there was confusion about the specificity of family class, no doubt produced by the covert racism of immigration officials which led Caribbean people to experience barriers contradicting the Act's intention (Anderson 1993:62).

CHAPTER VIII

An Alternative Women’s Movement

One day, one day, congoté

In the previous chapter, I discussed how I found Caribbean women using the ethic of independence to put into effect particular strategies of resistance for struggles primarily around issues of racism. In this chapter, I first explore the context of Canadian feminism within which Caribbean women made attempts to seek participation as women. In the Canadian women’s movement where Caribbean women often experienced the politics of exclusion. I demonstrate how this rejection precipitated a more aggressive thrust from most Caribbean women to find a place for their voices to deal with both race and gender. As a consequence, their brand of feminism that looked overall at the oppressions that subordinated them together with those that affected the community, formulated an alternative women’s movement of Black women nationally throughout Canada.

It was the second wave of Canadian feminism of the 1960s that many of the Caribbean women in this study faced on their arrival in Canada. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was appointed in 1967, following a lobby of “established women’s organizations” (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988). The Commission’s presence marked the beginning of the second wave of Canadian feminism. Its 488-page report on the status of women, published three years after, retained a white feminist bias that gender was the main and only source of women’s oppression. The report discussed “woman as one
category" and paid very scant attention to issues of immigration that affected Third World migrant women (Agnew 1996:128). As Pierson (1993) concludes, Canadian feminists at the time did not make attempts to examine differences among women. There was a tendency to conceptualize issues in isolation of each other thus denying their interconnectedness of issues (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988). Feminists of that era were described as mainly white, middle class women, who were often well educated (Pierson 1993). They had also begun reshaping feminist organizations and developing distinct categories of feminism. Apart from feminist organizing, activism in the peace movement, and support for the Civil rights movement, these feminists challenged the traditions of personal relationships (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988:40). Thus for many White feminists, the 1960s are "remembered as a decade of upheaval, change and revolutionary ideas, and resistance to authority" (38). For many women of colour, feminism of the sixties was another marginalizing process as Caribbean women in my study attest (Agnew 1996; Pierson 1993).

Women of colour often had different sites of organizing. For example, some women of African descent born in North America, founded in 1951, the Canadian Negro Women's Club, later known as 'Association' in Toronto. According to O'Farrell (1973), its purpose had a consciousness raising goal, that is to let people be "aware of, appreciate and further the merits of the Negroes in Canada". It tried to "exert a national influence" by having its members represented in mainstream organizations like the Young Women's Christian Association, the Medical Association, the National Council of Churches and so on (12). This organization, as stories reveal later in this research, played a significant role in the later development of the National Congress of Black Women of Canada in 1973.
How Canadian feminism progressed in the post 1967 and the 1970s. While throughout the seventies, the women's movement in Canada gained momentum, it still did not grapple with the issue of differences among women (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988; Stasuilis 1987). Agnew (1993) asserts, White feminists emphasized still the issues of gender equality, sexuality, reproduction and abortion, while "Asian, African and Caribbean women" were organizing to work on racism in immigration policies, housing, employment, education and social services, that "cut across lines of race and class" and were the potential for activism in solidarity (66). Even so, in 1975 Rosemary Brown, a Caribbean-born woman in Vancouver, whose campaign was "distinctly feminist" ran for the leadership of the National Democratic Party. Her efforts placed her among a small percentage of women who could be counted for being "the firsts" in Canada (Cohen 1993:25).

The white movement, homogenizing and essentializing, could boast of expansion in the numbers of women's organizations throughout Canada, and a settling of revolutionary ideas exposed in the sixties. It was certainly for them "a period of consolidation" in which organizations received fundings from the many existing provincial and federal government agencies (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988).

The home as a site of oppression remained a significant issue for white feminists. Some Caribbean women who were struggling with issues of race and acceptance in the women's movement were in opposition to centralizing the family in negative ways. According to Black feminists who reviewed this position in the literature, the family was often a site for support and resistance because of the sexism and racism in immigration policies. Many women of colour experienced long separations from their families (Stasiulis
1987:5). These separations were due to Caribbean women's positions as domestic service workers in the majority of white homes. White feminists often failed to see how their social power "revictimized" women of colour (Caribbean women) (Pierson 1993:189).

This is evident in the "historical and contemporary treatment of domestic workers from the Caribbean" where White women's reports could pathologize the identity of a Caribbean woman (Stasiulis 1987:6). Since racism was not within the primary politics, an issue for white women, Black (Caribbean) women "felt silenced and robbed" (Pierson 1993:207). Some of them spoke of the condescension and patronage they experienced in the movement, and the defensiveness of White women. In my own study one Caribbean woman speaks of her experience of Canadian feminists this way:

My initial foray into politics here was in feminist politics—'the Women's Movement'—in the seventies and early eighties which was *extremely* white. I dropped out because I was not taken seriously. I was tired of women who weren't getting it and there were no women of colour. Me was tired of dey tekkin me for a nice likkle brown girl! (Interview no. 37. 31 August 1995).

However the movement continued to challenge reproductive rights, and with pressure from lesbians and immigrant women, it was forced to look at sexual orientation and race in the second wave of feminism (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988). How did Caribbean women respond?

Caribbean women experienced racism in their workplaces, in housing, and in schools.3 These women experienced racism, on a daily basis. Their use of independence to participate in oppositional activities in resistance, counteracted some of these experiences and helped to develop what I name an *alternative women's movement* of the eighties. This movement survived outside the mainstream women's movement and had a different feminist ideology. While this alternative movement did not ignore efforts made
by white feminism to raise issues such as family violence, pay equity and so on, it focused on the omissions of race and difference in order to work for major change in conditions that affected the survival of the communities in which they lived. Like the mainstream movement, the alternative feminist movement was cross-class as well as geographically and politically diverse; and dependent on State funding and community financial contributions. Caribbean women's ideas of feminist resistance were not separated from and exclusive of their political relationships with men. They often felt the need to include women's issues as well those of the community at large. When they were faced with degrees of radical feminism in the white women's movement they sometimes expressed their doubts about leaving men's concerns out. As Maya comments,

I could see the oppression and yes, the sexism as the source of violence, yet it is never one of doing away with men in my community. I recognize they are oppressed on the basis of race as well. So for me it is a struggle, particularly, when lesbians say feminism means you can't be supportive of men because you are a feminist. It is something I never agreed with (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).

Women in the study clarified how their brand of feminism works as Aita describes,

I call myself a feminist, I do! because I believe in the liberation of women. Believe you me, I don't believe in the liberation of women outside the liberation of the family (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

In Canada, this alternative women's movement was one that enabled Caribbean women to function with men in community action. These women acted out of their consciences to respond to racism that produced social injustices on a variety of fronts. For instance, many of them, within the Black community, worked to oppose the system of Canadian immigration policies that conveyed significant oppressions to Caribbean people's lives in migration and settlement as the last Chapter showed.
As I analyzed these Caribbean women’s stories I found for many women, their political work was intense, diverse, and complex, as portrayed in Rebeka’s statement,

I began to feel that the only way I ever talked to anybody was in a meeting. I never had an ordinary conversation with anyone for a long time. It was just moving from one meeting to another (Interview no. 43. 11 December 1995).

In community organizations or on committees, many women felt that they could rarely find safe spaces to give voice to their issues as women. Sexism was everywhere. Rebeka again reflects,

When I think back, about being a woman-what happened for women in most of the movement, and that is the women did the jœ work to bring in the people to listen to the men spout the political line (Interview no. 43. 11 December 1995).

When Caribbean women sought to develop their own space, they did not lessen their commitment to strategies of resistance with their brothers in the wider struggle. When women of colour organized as women they did not easily find State support. Construed as victims, they were not easily seen as agents. However under the pressure of immigrant communities of women to recognize race and gender the Canadian State eventually responded. Two conferences were produced one at the federal level, in 1981 entitled, *Immigrant Women in the Canadian Labour Force*; and in 1983, the other at the provincial level, *The Visible Minority Woman: Conference on Racism, Sexism and Work*. These conferences generated reports and recommendations but more importantly they gave birth to two community organizations, the *National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women* and the *Ontario Coalition of Visible Minority Women* respectively. (Agnew 1996; Wallis, Giles and Hernandez 1988).
These government-initiated activities as well as, existing State agencies, for example, Ontario Women's Directorate; the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, were not completely responsive to the needs of women of colour. These women experienced underrepresentation and misrepresentation. That is, they were not represented in the many government offices and state agencies that were developed out of the white feminist struggle in the eighties; and they were misrepresented in research. Reports were done by women who did not belong to their communities (Pierson 1993; Wallis, Giles, and Hernandez 1988).5

By and large there was little significant change in the historic consciousness of white and mainstream feminism towards Black women and women of colour. Zindzi relates that she

got very disenchanted with the racism in the white run coalitions, those which were dominated by people who thought they needed to speak for you on your issue, and that pushed me more definitely into activities around the Black Secretariat. I was tired with dealing with racism in things that were supposed to be progressive organizations (Interview no. 9. 23 September 1994).

Caribbean women played a leadership role in a variety of community organizations. An example of such was the Black Secretariat, in which Annzinga, a founding member of the Black Secretariat, Olive was on the Board of Directors (consultant), and Zindzi became President in the 1990s and was responsible for establishing the Black Network. The Black Secretariat, was established in 1986 to form an umbrella organization that would identify and unify Black politics. It was responsible for organizational development, as well as dissemination of information to service the number of community-based organizations that were mushrooming in the city of Toronto during the eighties. I was employed there in 1986, when the first Black Directory was published and the first conference Up the
Organization was staged to meet educational needs for community organizing and management among the increasing number of groups, identifying as Black and focusing on the struggle of racism. Later on to address the wrongs the community experienced in schools, workplace or housing the organization formed a unit named, The Black Network, and instituted networking as a formal strategy that worked to transform public policy.6

Most likely because of the success in the struggles against domination, some Caribbean women in this study, like Zindzi, were in leadership positions and became financially involved in sustaining its operation. As well, many other Black/Caribbean women were voluntary workers there. This organization created some space for these women, but even here they were not fully in control.7

Feminist activism in the site of immigration/refugee issues.

There was a whole range of activities around immigration issues ranging from confrontational to reformist. Vanessa, for example, worked with a group of people with international backgrounds to counter stereotypes of immigrants:

I started with a group of people, New Vision Canada, about ten years ago. We got together and decided that newcomers to Canada would benefit from a better understanding of the Canadian political system. It would enable them to feel better connected and to take a more active part in the society (Interview no. 12. 14 May 1995).

There were also Caribbean women who worked to support families who suffered as a result of Canada's immigration policies. Lucinda, a single mother, who living in Metropolitan Toronto Housing, says she responded with volunteer assistance to families in her neighbourhood who experienced difficulties during the settling period. She recalls her story,

Mr. H...had recommended me to Children's Aid Society as a single mother, working and living in Metro Housing, and doing well I think, with
four kids. He thought I could be a great role model to the families coming to the Society. I started volunteering with the West Indian Moms and Daughters Support Group there, and realized that moms just didn't have daughters, there were lots of sons who didn't have role models. So I started the first program called the West Indian Volunteer Youth Program, recruiting young West Indian men to link as role models to these youth. Like today everybody talks about 'role models' well that started way back in 1984. We would do linking and special tutoring. The program was run from the basement of my home. I got donations of furniture and computer equipment from Humber College.

In 1985, I turned it into an organization called West Indian Volunteer Community Support Services. The reason was people who came from the West Indies-the name used at the time-were the only people who emigrated differently from anybody else. My goal was to focus on the issues of how our women came here and what has happening to them in the society. If it weren't for that immigration process, I don't think we would have had so many Black kids in crisis today (Interview no. 24. 24 June 1995).

I quote Lucinda at length to emphasise first my point, made in Chapter V, about the link in Caribbean woman's identity between independence and community. Next, I regard this initiative as significant to reduce problems of cultural racism that many people might have experienced in mainstream agencies, such as Newcomers Ontario, that is government based. Third, from a feminist point of view, it addresses the issue of gender relations and connects it to community interdependence.

Caribbean women's feminism emerged in the context of refugee issues as well. For example, Cheryl speaks of her response to the wave of refugee problems with which she was faced because of her reputation as an activist. She recalls,

You remember there were a lot of people coming from Trinidad and Guyana as refugees? Well, I don't know where they got our names or how they knew I was involved in politics, but before you knew it, people were calling my house day and night, asking me for help and what to do (Interview no. 10. 22 August 1994).
Yet others were empowered to initiate alternate approaches for counselling refugee women, who might not be aware of the potential of the interlocking systems of race, class, gender and sexuality. Yelena describes this activity:

I am doing work with refugee women. I am trying the integrated approach, because I just can't talk about wife assault in a vacuum...they have been tortured, raped, had children taken from them...so I work in terms of violence from a perspective of race making them aware of what they expect in terms of the system of domination: how they will be treated; their colour of skin; and their languages (Interview no. 28. 29 June 1995).

**Feminist activism in social service agencies and other sites.** Many Caribbean women in this study spoke passionately about their attempts to reform social work agencies. These are encounters involving what Essed (1991) has described as the "micro inequities perpetuating in the system" (37, 38). Thus it was in social services agencies that Ariel, resident in Montreal, had to frequently use her professional status at times to intervene in racist practices. Through many of her actions she was able to change the lives of children at risk. When I asked her what motivated her to work so assiduously with youth, and she replied:

Police brutality! and the wider aspect-the racism that you find in social agencies, the over-representation of our kids placed in homes. Now, I can't even directly help in this part of the system, as all my clients are white. I believe I do my job to the best of my ability, but I am dismayed to hear from my people all those tales of the way they are treated, the way they are put down, the way they are devalued (Interview no. 15. 6 June 1995).

At another Montreal agency, Anne's story indicates she may have had more control of the system, as she relates about her resistance there this way:

I was already in the social work field, and we were beginning to see how terrible Black children were being cared for and stuff like that, so we formed a Committee for the Welfare and Development of Black Children to monitor and support the system (Interview no. 12. 7 June 1995).
Yaa in Toronto, however, challenged the administration of programs for Black young women. This is her story of what occurred:

I worked at a Group Home where the majority of teenagers were experiencing problems at home. I believe it was the backlash of poorly designed immigration policies-separated families, you know. I remember a lot of children would complain to me, because I guess of the commonalities we have. They would say how white workers would insult their food, telling them it smells, and so on. I remember clearly documenting these complaints as I thought it was a way of exposing the practice. But what they did they revised the forms providing only two lines for reporting. When I suggested a workshop, hesitating to call it "anti-racism", and asked for a Caribbean woman to facilitate it they brought in a Jewish woman. But in retrospect, I still was able to get the education done (Interview no. 10. 29 May 1995).

The prevalence of racist practices becomes a rule in institutions when white professionals opposed changes that Yaa constituted. She shows her resilience, by continuing to make alternative responses to undermine these rules that govern this agency, when she says,

I was able to resist some of the racism with the articles I wrote even in their newsletter, which I composed with a very African and Black focus. I did one celebrating differences with the contributions of Black women. I also made sure that the shelter had faces on these women on the walls during Black History month. I became 'the bad girl' and no one was talking to me. But I made sure that they at least wrote an Anti-racism policy (Interview no. 10. 29 May 1995).

These stories exemplify how some Caribbean women ventured to change oppressive structures in institutions. I associate this activism with Collins (1990) assertion of "the struggle for institutional transformation", that is one of two dimensions of "Black women's activism" She includes in this dimension participation in the larger sphere, such as "boycotts" and "revolts" (142). Caribbean women in this study have demonstrated strengths in similar areas as well, like the African Liberation marches of the seventies, that I talked about earlier.
Feminist activism in the site of cultural production. Caribbean women in the performing arts in the 1970s and 1980s had little choice but to work with mainstream organizations as actors. Few nonwhite peoples nor themes of non-European origin were evident in theatres in metropolitan countries. Caribbean women in my study, resisted by establishing their own professional theatre organizations. It meant employing a strategy of resistance in an area that might have been deemed inessential for survival, so for these women the risks were greater where community support was less forthcoming. I suggest that the establishment of these theatres was a special component of this alternative women's movement. The reproduction of theatres, in the eighties, to target the needs of Caribbean and Black people challenges stereotypical ideas of the dependency of migrants on the mainstream in all racial minority communities. In a concrete way, this act of resistance amounted to responses to racism by providing both artistic opportunities and employment for Black actors in Canada. The first, Black Theatre Canada, was founded in 1972 and closed in 1988 for lack of funding; however, the second one, is at the time of writing still a viable institution. Black Theatre Canada, however, achieved some measure of success during its lifetime. Lena who initiated and administered this project largely with her own earnings, says,

when Theatre Workshop Productions changed for the season, I was not one of them. So I made a joke with one of the actors, and I said 'You know what! I am going to start my own theatre' and we laughed. Black Theatre Canada started as a joke, although the starting of a Black organization is a very political thing, the motivation was cultural...the effect of it on lives was a political one, and that is what happened with Black Theatre Canada. As I started it there was such an impetus to do it-I don't know where it came from, all I know is I wanted to act, I wanted to express myself, I am Black! It was a point I began to realize...there are things that Black people stand for, there are things we express which show our culture and that could be done in drama, and that was my raison d'être for the theatre (Interview no. 27. 28 June 1995).
The other Caribbean woman, Lauretta, joined this theatre in 1978, and worked as artistic director and executive director while Lena was on sabbatical leave; and afterwards, she continued in a consulting position. While she spoke very impressively about her experiences at the Theatre and her admiration of Lena’s courage, she decided to start her own, with a focus on children workshops. This is how she tells her story,

I never forget, when Theatre in the Rough got started, I began in 1985, but formally in 1986. I remember our first play. We tended to do anti-apartheid work, so anti-racism, which is a parallel. The result was someone wrote Prime Minister Trudeau and Joe Clark his Foreign Minister to complain we were an anti-white movement. The thing is we are a theatre organization, not even funded by Canada Arts Council. We do functional work that is why we call it social action theatre. Every activity we do is functional. It has an end result which is constructive to growth. Fifty per cent of the work at the Theatre focuses on authenticating our Caribbean and African peoples; while fifty per cent is how the people in Canada interact with each other. We produce an interactive booklet for each play we do and leave with people. Everything we do is for that purpose of social action. We do job placement. Our definition of 'theatre' is not European, not Modern either...we are out of my experience—Moi aussi, j’ai Dominique! That is of the Caribbean—a cultural race of people (Interview no. 21. 14 June 1995).

What is interesting in those two stories is the positive and committed nature of the responses to cross tremendous barriers created by racial dominance. Quotes like, "as I started it there was so much impetus to do it"; and "our definition of theatre is ... we are out of my experience" transmit their understanding of learning resistance at home and how it is to be enacted with power.

Demonstrating the power of independence was almost at a private level when Aretha, teacher, institutionalized Caribbean dance in a Canadian town. She began her community activism with the development of a youth dance group at her home in Kitchener-Waterloo, because of her love for dancing, combined with an interest in youth. This is her story:
When I got to Kitchener-Waterloo, the dance "thing" persisted, and so did the yearning to work with youth of Caribbean background and other Black youth. So I started a little Saturday dance group for youths. The parents were delighted. We entered multicultural events and out of these experiences the Caribbean Canadian Cultural Association of Kitchener-Waterloo was formed, with yours truly as co-founder and Cultural Chair (1975). Not only did we dance, we added an academic and athletic component to these Saturday programs. Unfortunately, by the early eighties, as kids got older and moved on, and adult volunteers dwindled as did the spirit of CCCA (Interview no. 34. 29 August 1995).

These stories illustrate social and political consciousness in the struggle against racism, not only for Caribbean women to work on behalf of race, but to expose their desire for self-definition. Moreover these stories add to the diversity of the contexts in which Caribbean women used agency and skills to be independent so as to engage in the struggle for liberation from dominance. These forms of cultural production were the ways these women created spaces in the diaspora to add to the discourse of Caribbean cultural/ethnic identity. Women reconstructed the legacy of resistance doing whatever was necessary for liberation.

Emergence of feminist organizations: a climax to the movement.

The formation of the Congress of Black Women, Toronto Chapter, and the Ontario Coalition of Visibility of Minority women, was the responsibility of 15% of the Caribbean women in my sample. A total of 23% have membership in the Chapters of the Congress in Toronto, Montreal and Kitchener-Waterloo. I use these organizations as landmarks to conclude my tracing of the alternative women's movement, because they represent the sites from which groups of Caribbean women politicized women-centred issues.

I consider the culmination of two specific women's organizations that involved some Caribbean women in my study to be the culmination of establishing an alternative women's movement. Emerging from the responses to an initiative offered by the Ontario
government in 1983, these organizations enabled these women and women of colour to
direct their foci to policies of race relations and multiculturalism as they affected women’s
issues. The organizations consisting of Caribbean and Black women in one, and all Visible
Minority Women in the other were formed so that these women could become collectively
‘watchdogs’ of their recommendations to governments and monitor the implementation of
policies (Agnew 1996; Gabriel 1996).

As I discussed earlier in the chapter the National Congress of Black Women of
Canada was preceded by the Canadian Negro Women’s Club in 1951. However, its
continuity is related to the activism of Caribbean women in the eighties, as Nikki explains:

I really got involved in 1976-77, when the proposal for an National
organization came to Windsor. You see there was a history dating back to
the National Black Coalition, which was dominated by males so Kay
Livingstone, tired of the sexism, organized a conference in 1973 invited
Black women from across Canada and from Detroit as well. It caught fire,
and there were meetings yearly in Montreal, Halifax, and there at this
meeting in 1976 there was a resolution passed to draft an idea for a National
organization since ad hoc meetings never get anywhere. Hence it came to
Windsor in 1977. I was a member of the Steering Committee, and we drew
up a Constitution, developed communication strategies and so on. We
mailed out to 200 women across this country. The woman who was
appointed Coordinator, suddenly disappeared. A report was due in 1979,
so I called members and encouraged them to do the work, and the meeting
was held in Winnipeg in 1980. So people applauded the job, and suggested
I remain in a key role, so I became first President of the National Congress
of Black Women in Canada. I was actively involved in laying the
foundation and when I left in 1982 there were 5 chapters. Now it has grown
to 25-26 Chapters (Interview no. 22. 17 June 1995).

Aita, of my sample, had the job responsibility to activate a government initiative, and
played a major role in the birth of the Congress of Black Women in Ontario, and the
Ontario Coalition of Visible Minority Women, as she relates

In 1983, a number of women, Bianca and others who were involved in
Human Rights were seeing a lot of issues internally around minority women
and were pushing an idea to have some collective representation of their
voices. I was then hired by the Ontario Women’s Directorate, but knew it was impossible for one voice to speak, so we struck a Committee and decided that we would have a conference. My responsibility was to do outreach as Coordinator, and I did that to all races and heritages of women across the province and included First Nations women. The outreach was such that I would hold community meetings with these groups wherever they are—Thunder Bay, Kitchener, wherever. I had meetings with Chinese, Korean, continental African women, Black Francophone, Philippino and a diversity of women, but they were few Canadian women of African descent present. One member of the Committee who belonged to that group, saw this mobilizing as an attack on government, so I don’t know! Anyhow, it culminated in this the Conference called The Visible Minority Woman: Racism, Sexism and Work. Well it was a ground swell, we thought it would attract 100-200 women, well, 500 women turned up. I have a report. We had workshops and one of the ideas that emerged from the groups is ‘we are women of all different backgrounds, who are known as visible minority women, we need to form our own organization’. That is the starting point of the Coalition (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

According to Aita’s story, the Conference created a momentum for racially identified women to affirm their solidarity by first forming themselves into single community groups and second to form a Coalition. For example, Black, Chinese, Korean, South Asian (Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims), as well as, other different groupings each became or formalized women’s organizations. The First Nations women’s organization had been previously consolidated and left as they came. For Black (Caribbean) women, the need was the same, as Aita continues,

When I met with Black women, they said we need to form a organization too, but as we were reminded of the existence of the National Congress, we agreed we should become the Congress for Ontario. Two of the women, decided they did not want that organization, and they went ahead. I did not see theirs as rivalling, they consisted of a different foci, while most of us were in the political stream to tackle issues, they were interested in how to get a job, how to dress (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

Annzinga, whose story, discussed in Chapter VI, was of her strength in enabling people of diversity to participate equally in decision making initiatives, continues with these details:
It always bothered me that some of the issues we raised, women in other communities might have raised at some point before the Conference on Racism, Sexism and Work. One meeting at least should be called with these other women. The other concern which I had was that we would have this Conference, a report would be written and that would be the end of it. If it were to be made serious, it would have to have follow-up by some kind of body to pursue action around the recommendations. We had made decisions etc. I then started talking to women about bringing continuity to the Conference. I went off and got a separate room and invited women to attend a meeting. Many of the Black and visible minority groups came and the Coalition of Visibility Minority Women was formed. Around that time, Black women were also talking about a Toronto Chapter of the Congress of Black Women, and so it got solidified there (Interview no. 45. 1 October 1996).

Among the group of Black (Caribbean) women was Maya who was searching for the privilege of leadership that the Toronto Chapter brought to others like herself, as she says, The Congress of Black Women Toronto was formed as a result of the 1983 Conference. It was amazing it moved from Black consciousness to a feminist consciousness based on our own experiences with men in organizations and men in your life. Suddenly that sense of freedom, and kind of forces that I saw closing in on me, was not only racism but sexism as well (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).

These are some women who worked hard at community organizing previously but had not been accorded positions of leadership in previous sites of organizing. These new organizations consumed all their energies. As Bianca says, we used to meet at AnnZinga’s kitchen table-a lot of work was done there. We were the group who decided what the focus of that Chapter was-we needed it to deal with real issues as opposed to being a social club, right! We did groundwork for writing of the Constitution of the Chapter and the beginning of the process of having meetings. Now, with the Coalition, we had a broad-based group-Koreans, Chinese, South Asians, First Nations, you name it! When you look at that Constitution and its objectives, the position was grass-roots, just like the Congress. These organizations were about raising issues around jobs, employment and housing (Interview no. 2. 18 August 1994).

They knew how to cope with these responsibilities because they had learnt the logistics of organizing from their experiences in other resistance groups. They were less
informed about how to explore the issues of the female identity as Caribbean women until
the Conference. Maya addresses this issue:

Eight of us in a group called Women in Support of Revolutionary Change
for about one to two years, were reading and studying. I remember one
book I read was called the Woman Question written by Lenin. We studied
it trying to come to grips or to grapple with the whole issue of feminism,
which for me, I didn't understand fully what that means. Reading the Black
American writers, you know, they were able to bring in the race piece
which I couldn't get in the European interpretation of feminism. So when
the Conference was held in 1983, dealing with issues of immigration,
racism and work, I could relate to it because it was my experience, coming
from the Caribbean, you know, your education is devalued and so on. So
for me being involved in a Black Women's organization was also part of the
search for identity (Interview no. 26. 27 June 1995).

I argue on the basis of my earlier definition of independence, that these women had
an understanding of how the dynamics of oppression work to subordinate women and how
to resist by doing what is not expected of them. Possessing this spirit of independence
some Caribbean women can successfully challenge authority. They can organize to disrupt
mainstream politics that deny the existence of the double jeopardy—race and gender
oppressions that marginalized women's experience. These Caribbean women relentlessly
led their organizations to make demands that their concerns for status in the society were
never overlooked in policy making. Gabriel (1996) informs us that one of the members of
the Congress, during a meeting with the Minister of Citizenship and Minister Responsible
for Women's Issues in 1988 stressed that

in the course of advancing the status of culturally and racially diverse
population of Ontario as well as in the course of advancing the status of
women, immigrant and visible minority women should not be left behind,
neglected or ignored. We are not asking for special treatment. Within the
struggle for equality, equality for one group is not the same as for another,
simply because we are not all at the same starting line. 13
The sentiment expressed in those words is demonstrated in the rise of political activity that took place between the alliance of the Coalition and the Congress and the provincial government of the day. Again this alliance was a space from which Caribbean women and other racial minority women vigorously pursued race and gender equality. As Aita comments:

People talk about Employment Equity easily now. But I can tell you that the people who led this movement were women of the Congress and the Coalition—nobody else! No one else was talking about it nor about affirmative action. We were writing about it and comparing the situation to the United States. We wrote briefs on domestics, we wrote on every issue you can think about (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

These Caribbean women continued redefining their strengths as survivors of the racism, as Aita’s remarks indicate:

As I got into the Ontario Women’s Directorate, I realise the strategy white women were using. If they want to change a text, they get a consultant—they talk about seniors, pension, whatever! But we don’t have a voice! So I decided that now we have a Congress we have a Coalition, when we go to the government, we pull representatives from every constituency of the Coalition—Koreans, Sikhs, Chinese, and so on, and let each articulate what their stands were on any position. We did it at the level of the province and the level of the city. For example, we were able to make the City respect Muslim women’s differences in the use of recreational Centres. We have been going to all the governments this way since 1983, except we have not gone to the Progressive Conservatives in this era (Interview no.20. 14 June 1995).

Das Gupta (1986) describes this community organization of racial minority women this way:

The uniqueness of the Coalition is its success in bringing together women from a variety of visible minority groups. It has also made the community more aware of the issues of racism and sexism (32).

Some of the success of the Coalition to maintain the voices of immigrant and visible minority women can be attributed to many Caribbean women, among whom was Naomi.
She was present at the Conference, and subsequently became a staff member. This is what she says about some of what the Coalition has been doing:

I was hired by the Board when they started a Job Development project for nurses. I made myself conversant with all the issues and the related authorities dealing with them to counsel immigrant women. Among our programs we have the advocacy, the language instruction, the occupational instruction for health care workers. We have the ESL program, and other projects such as wife assault/sexual assault education, AIDS education for frontline health care providers. We have been doing the work of keeping in touch with the grass-roots problems (Interview no. 43. 26 March 1996).

The alliance of the Coalition and the Congress (Toronto Chapter) continued to exhibit the strengths of ethnically mixed leadership of racial minority women. There was an opportunity again to show political independence, when Annzinga initiated the process to become competitive with white organizations for cooperative funding. She says

As a result of my organizing around tenants in the apartment building, I became interested in low cost housing. Then I looked around I found people in the progressive left--white and predominantly middle-class--were becoming the beneficiaries of all the coop housing being built in the city. From my perspective, this alternate form of housing wasn't benefitting the victimized poor tenants and minorities. So I started the whole process, applications and the works, but after some negative experiences applying singly, we did a joint venture-Congress and the Coalition-and was successful 14 (Interview no. 45. 16 September 1996).

The Congress quickly expanded as an organization. For instance, after Aretha had experimented with her dance cum educational group at home, she came to a realization that racism and sexism are oppressions that will not disappear. She reasons how a new Chapter of the Congress of Black Women in Canada was born this way,

For a while in the mid 1980s a group of us women met for tea and chat on a monthly basis. The chats often centred around our children, often the plight of the girls and of our women. We were examining issues as they surfaced in our region, province, country etc. It became evident that "tea" was not enough. Inequities, including harassment; family violence; problems on the job and more were issues that affected so many people-so many, many Black and immigrant women. Once the latter could manage the
language, they became fine, but somehow, Black women remained visibly "invisible". On behalf of the "tea party" women, and myself I began to attend meetings that had to do with Black women, and in particular, the Congress of Black Women. In the summer of 1988, at our request for a visit, we had an impressive presentation from the Ontario representative. In September 1988, the Kitchener-Waterloo Chapter was born, with myself as President and a membership of twelve all told (Interview no. 34. 29 August 1995).

The continuous way in which this group of Caribbean women channelled their energies into community work, gives credence to the fact that the lines between the private and public spheres of their lives are blurred. All but one of these women who have related stories about feminist organizing, were mothers at the time, three of them were single mothers, and in general, they either used their homes as meeting places, or brought their children to other places for meeting as Bianca says.

I had a support system, my mother, my brother and my uncle, if I wanted to do more I could have, but I thought I was there for them. But my children have a different view, they say I was always going to meetings and dragging them to meetings as well (Interview no. 2. 18 August 1994).

Notwithstanding the support that these women may have enjoyed, their lifestyles converged family and community activism to preserve their own independence. They were experiencing the intense conflict in a system dominated by patriarchal relations and ideas of women's spheres. Therefore, to maintain their commitment to resistance strategies against racism and sexism they had to create alternative lifestyles. One way was in Annzinga's description,

For me, my community activity was my way of socializing. Apart from the fetes, if you want to call it that, or fundraising activities, we would put on, it wasn't that you got to go to a party outside of that (Interview no. 43. 16 September 1996).

Another way was Aita's,
Since Maya and I had done a lot of political work together we could be honest and straightforward, so we lived in a communal kind of house where she, her husband and I shared the child-rearing of our two sons. We also engaged in a great amount of other sharing: money etc. It was at our place, many women would come and share issues. Sometimes a few of the women stayed with us when they had problems of abuse in their homes (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

Feminist organizing for Caribbean women brought about many extensive gains, and produced some complexities to create tensions in the politics of identity. Caribbean women connected with other racially marginalized women to present a feminist analysis of oppression to the State on a regular basis, that displayed leadership and give visibility to many visible minority women. Chapters of the Congress of Black Women have proliferated throughout Canada regularly throughout the decade. In 1998, there are thirteen chapters in the province of Ontario, that are linked to a provincial chapter. Chapters have continued to perpetuate their own agendas of education for self-development, community organizing and political awareness, cultural content for preserving identities, and social action against community issues. For example, the Toronto Chapter, among its social action objectives, has produced a video Children are not the problem (1988). It has also played a successful and major role in mobilizing nurses around equity issues at a Toronto hospital; and it has participated in struggles against police brutality with the Black Action Defence Committee, a predominantly male community organization. As well, the Kitchener-Waterloo Chapter has constructed a high profile for "Black women" in that town, as "it is now a force to be reckoned with" in that community (Aretha 1995:34). Several of its members represent the Congress on major governing Boards in the town, including the University and the Police Relations Board to name but a few. The National Chapter continues its biennial Conference in different cities of Canada, thus retaining a national presence. The
accomplishments of other Chapters and the individual efforts of others are too numerous
to mention here.

Identity conflicts: challenging the connections. In reflecting on the alternative women's
movement, it is clear that the Black identity has subsumed other identities of Caribbean
women, particularly Indian Caribbean women activists. There is relative silence of Indian-
Caribbean women voices at the point of the formation of Black feminist organizations. One
of the reasons might be this feminist organizing was led by Caribbean women who were
influenced in part by the Pan African movement. Some Caribbean women in my study
expressed this connection. For example, Aita notes "I was clearly decided on my allegiance
at the Pan African Congress, and developed a closer line with Black Americans" (Interview
no. 20. 14 June 1995). The sensitivity to defining Blackness was new for many Caribbean
women, and it reflected the then current climate of change globally when people sought
to crystallize an identity as opposed to whiteness. Brah (1992) notes that the term 'Black',
used in "the politics of solidarity between African Caribbean and South Asian activists" of
the eighties became very controversial (127). While it was to be used as a political
colour, it acknowledged cultural differences but aimed at achieving political unity against
racism. Yet the evidence of the self-ascription, Black, in the stories among Indian-
Caribbean women in Canada problematizes the homogeneity that it produces among those
of African descent. For example, some Indian-Caribbean women who sought to embrace
Black identity (see Appendix I) faced experiences like this on the one hand in Haniffa’s
story,

I remember when Mandela was released, we of the ANC support committee
had just left a meeting when I heard on the radio about his release, so we
had to turn around and make a plan. We had a big rally on the Danforth.
All the people came to celebrate. We had artists like Clifton Joseph, etc.
And this woman who was from the Caribbean, looked at me and said, "What are you doing here, it is not your cause!" I started crying, for here's is a person I considered my sister, my people telling me I didn't have a cause to be happy (Interview no. 4. 2 August 1994).

On the other hand, Kamla whose activism was differently political in her role with Caribbean Cultural Committee, says,

I want to say the Black community does not include people like myself, and I consider myself a Caribbean person, and a Black person, I may not be Black in the sense as one refers to it in this continent, but I am not White. When you reflect on who you are and what you are and where you fit in with this society, people like us are not identified in any form or fashion. But I feel strongly that there should be more integration within the Caribbean community. Now there is a segregation between what you call Indians and Blacks. I think we are Trinidadians-or if you want Caribbean, but still each one of the islands is so different in many ways (Interview no. 38. 5 September 1995).

This quote implies the identity of an Indian-Caribbean woman in the movement is subject to censure: it is barred. Yet another reason is advanced by Sumanta who sees it this way:

Now I definitely describe myself as an Into-Caribbean, Trinidadian or woman of colour depending on the context I am in, and my organizing is happening in different areas too. For instance, I am on the Board of Desh Pardesh and I try to push that identity of the Into-Caribbean community that is showing in my work. One thing about the Into-Caribbean community, there is little political presence and that's very detrimental to our existence. The reason maybe that we do a lot of social organizing. I have tried to figure it out why. It has to do with where we turn for support, like we are very family oriented in a way, we don't look outwards, we look inward (Interview no. 40. 19 September 1995).

My research opens up a challenge for a discourse about the politics of identity among African and non-African Caribbean women in community activism. Could the knowledge of difference as constructed by white supremacy problematize the terms of a Caribbean identity?

Caribbean identity is problematic to define, because it has emerged from one of the most complex societies in the twentieth century, that my historical process in Chapter III
attempted to trace. Nation and ethnicity are imagined in a series of patterns that at times become united in the region at various levels of nationalism, and polarised on grounds of ethnicity or religion. For example, women in this sample of cross-heritages, imagined the social and celebratory aspects of community as giving them a sense of belonging to one nation. Yet they speak with a consciousness of occurrences of ethnic divisions sometimes because of race/politics alliances; patriarchal leadership; religion, or a lack of knowledge of the construction of any of the groups. Marise, of Portuguese, Mixed Race and African heritage, who was involved in activism in Guyanese organizations, replied to my question about exclusion from the wider Black community this way.

Definitely, I think that the groups here organized African or Black very much want to work from a Black separatist position whereby they want to focus (and I understand why they are doing that) on the connections between the Black community here and Africa. I support that work, and I support that political struggle. On the other hand, there needs to be a recognition that the diaspora is diverse, and there are people belonging to Black and other communities and have a combination heritage like myself. If the focus is only on the relationship between Africa and the Caribbean, then how the colonialists have constructed identities may not be as visible for us to get an understanding of how colonial heritage has affected everybody (Interview no. 41. 27 September 1995).

From my experience as facilitator of several workshops in the nineties, a few Indian-Caribbean women and a few visible with lighter colour skin are disproportionately present in different chapters of the Congress. Yet, not being Black in the colour of the skin might not have been a prohibiting factor in the movement for many of these Caribbean women. How they chose to identify themselves might make a difference in their association with Black politics. As Brah (1992) asserts, terms like "'Black', Indian, or Asian" most likely signify differences in cultural strategies and hence outcomes, and they mobilize different sets of cultural or political identities and set limits to where the boundaries of a 'community' are established (131).
It is hard to determine whether or not ascribing the term 'Black' to the movement can preclude any Caribbean women's involvement in it. Historically, the ways in which Blackness was constructed as degrading and negative may have to do with how a diverse groups of women associate themselves with radical politics. Exclusion of women may partly be based on skin colour or ethnicity, and partly on politics of conservatism. Those Caribbean women who initiated feminist organizing, as their stories tell, were constituted as Pan Africanists. They were associated with men in the experiences of mobilizing protests and celebrating African Liberation Day. In other words, Caribbean women of different skin gradations might not necessarily be excluded but may elect to disassociate themselves from Black, and yet be involved in other strategies of community organizing.

To reach to any understanding why women of colour were not drawn to Black feminist organizing in larger numbers is a topic of further research. It is sufficient to argue that feminist organizing among Caribbean women, was in resistance to sexism in all communities, black and white, when a certain group of these women became conscious of the erasure of their voices and the lack of representation of their needs. At this time my work shows the empowerment of some women to select their own space as Black and Caribbean women in the diaspora rather than have their ideas erased by racism, and their potential excluded by sexism.

Politics which divide. Caribbean Canadian feminists also struggled with issues of differences among women. Lesbianism was regarded as radical feminism—an elimination of men—as Maya pointed out earlier, and so outreach to draw a number of politically active Black lesbian women into the shift to feminist organizing was less effective. Caribbean women in their efforts to struggles with racist and sexist oppressions had not dealt with
issues of lesbian women that linked gender and sexuality. As Audre Lorde (1985) has so clearly put it "lesophobia and heterosexism" become stumbling blocks to "sisterhood even among Black women who want to claim the site of most multiplied dispossession".16 Lorde, in her lesbian identity, affirms the many ways in which she connects and re-connects (18). Abena, who was very articulate about the problem of internal politics of difference puts it this way,

I have been identified with the lesbian and gay community. You know, there has been a tremendous amount of homophobia in our community and we cannot deny that. As I identified more and more with the gay community, I could feel them turning away and treating me with more and more disdain. I don’t know why I am seen in this (Black) community as an oppositional person, that is antagonistic to one Black male leader. I have never been antagonistic to him, but I have brought out the issue of wife abuse in the height of his problem, because I feel we have to bring it out from the closet and deal with it in the community (Interview no. 29. 11 July 1995).

On reflection by some of the women in my sample, the difficulty was also that lesbianism was not addressed for the agenda in the formation of the Congress and the Coalition, that meant that lesbian issues were not defined and prioritized in any part of the anti-racist struggle. It could only be accounted for again by the socially and historically internalized information about differences in sexuality. As Aita says,

I recall many women who perhaps 'came out' at the time of the Congress, used to come to talk about issues at my place. There was never any mention of lesbianism. I remember we took political sides so badly. We followed the events in Zimbabwe struggle, and we had two groups, the Mugabe faction and another. But these women had never talked about the lesbianism as an aspect of themselves (Interview no. 20. 14 June 1995).

Clearly the dominance of heterosexism creates a political space that foregrounds some women. The internal dynamics of feminist community organizing that problematize differences in a Caribbean diaspora community needs to be explored to transcend race,
class and sexuality. These findings merely bring forward an awareness that we require a detailed analysis to assist in reducing internal oppressions in the alternative women's movement of Caribbean women in Canada.

ENDNOTES

1. Translated: Some day it will happen or it did happen.


3. The term 'Caribbean' is used as an inscription to include the title "Black" found in many of the organization founded or maintained by a majority of Caribbean women and men. See Appendix I for self-definitions of the women in my sample.


5. For example the reports in the preceding note illustrate this.

6. In conservation with a current Executive member of the Black Secretariat, we recalled two incidents which would could be named as successful lobbying. In the eighties, this organization in reviewing the offensiveness of an Avon advertisement which negated images of Black women, confront the administration and had the ad removed from billboards and other sources in the sixties. In the nineties, the Scarborough Board of Education introduced the Zero tolerance policy in school. The Black Secretariat, through community mobilizing, was instrumental in making changes to this policy, so that the administration acknowledged that racism ought to be considered as an act of violence.

7. The Black Secretariat remains a community organization identified with information gathering and dissemination, and to a lesser degree advocacy work at the time of this writing. Its fourth edition 1990 Directory contains 163 entries of African, Black and Caribbean named community organizations. It has a youth arm, called African Youths in Action. In the late eighties and early nineties it had achieved a reputation of radicalism in its approaches to racist struggles among educational and commercial institutions. One of successes was to win the fight against... in advertising.

8. This organization’s brochure states that it is now housed in Etobicoke, in a unit of a Metropolitan Housing Project, and conducts advocacy programs, an information and referral service, and a wide range of other support services to West Indian youth and other disadvantaged families.
9. Rella Braithwaite and Tessa Benn-Ireland (1993). *Some Black Women: Profiles of Black Women in Canada*. Toronto: Sister Vision Press. This text is an endorsement of the struggle with financial problems which Lena experienced to keep the Theatre alive. However, in the late eighties it produced some of the most successful projects. It will most of all be remembered for the staging of *A Caribbean Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1983 for which it received rave reviews (78).


14. The Barsa Kelley Cooperative Housing, a 134 unit cooperative and targeted at accommodating racial minority people is situated on Lakeshore Boulevard West, Toronto. It brochure circulated in 1993 stated that the Housing Complex was named to honour Barsa Kelly whose life was lost in the Air India crashed. Bianca, of my study, described her as taking "a very dynamic part" in the formation of the Coalition.

15. I acknowledge Sherene Razack's contribution to this argument about the mutual exclusion between the majority groups, Indian and African.

CONCLUSION

Ay, ay--is know, ah know, we!

**Identifying through resistance.** This study conducted with forty-six Caribbean women, including myself, began by examining a Canadian body of scholarly literature as well as Caribbean research and imaginative literature to find an identity for this heterogeneous group of women. The diversity of this group was in race, class and sexual orientation. This sample of Caribbean women specified their own heritages, that is illustrated in Appendix II. I found little in Canadian scholarly literature about how Caribbean women survived systems of oppressions in their lives. In Caribbean research and fiction, I found Caribbean women described as strong resourceful and independent. I set out to examine if the Caribbean women in this study might be described similarly. As Chapter II discussed I worked with the notion of subjectivity, agency and resistance arguing that Caribbean women's experiences must be historically contextualized. To begin to do so, I explored the histories of resistance of Caribbean women in the Caribbean region. I showed that these Caribbean women share interconnected histories. The interconnectedness was created through the shared experience of colonialism. Although adversity was meted out differently in varying contexts of race, colour and class,² in these histories Caribbean women have an understanding of survival that I suggested amounts to a culture of resistance. My study, having explored the subjective experiences of some Caribbean women in Canada,
demonstrates that this culture of resistance was re-enacted to distinguish a Caribbean women's identity here. Primarily, I argued that Caribbean women demonstrate an ethic of independence in their individual and collective stories of survival.

In this Chapter, I discuss my conclusion in this way. First I state that this study enables us to transform our ways of thinking about identity through reconceptualizing subjectivity. Next, I believe the study establishes that there is collective resistance in Caribbean women's disparate activism in sites of oppressions both in the Caribbean and Canada. As a consequence, this work helps us to recognize that home is an educative institution, where women like myself learn to respond to subordination. The manner of the response, I have named an ethic of independence. I offer some direction of my own continued use of this ethic to close my story in this thesis. Finally, I state how the study can be used as an educative tool to provide instructions about ways in which resistance can be applied.

First, the study enables us to reconceptualize subjectivity in demonstrating how the historical processes of genocide, servitude, slavery and indentureship have influenced the educational responses that subordinated groups make to domination. The mapping of these histories showed that the interconnectedness of histories justified my approaches to a Caribbean woman's identity through a model of diversity. Thus this project helps us to understand the weaknesses in homogenizing identity, and in assessing the value of women only by external characteristics. It forces us to return and to re-examine the many components that reside in a historical continuum to constitute and reconstitute our subjectivities. These are the subjectivities that shape some Caribbean women who grasp the power to act within patriarchal and imperialist systems because they know how to
negotiate within limits of the discourses which construct them. In saying this I wish to retain postmodern notions of discourses constituting the individual, as well as, to incorporate the notion that the individual can constitute herself. According to Cornel West (1992) "agency, capacity and ability" embody a significant theme that "accentuates" the humanity of the oppressed and encourages ideas that we as individuals are active in "making and remaking ourselves" (29). Thus in this study, subjects demonstrate that a politicised identity may or may not be used by the oppressed. The colonizer's identity could be rejected or reexamined, redefined or reworked, but oppression remains a strong reason for changing it from being static. Resistance is instrumental in making these changes. These Caribbean women's stories demonstrate the struggle each of them had to displace dominant ideologies. They were able to take that course of action to transform racist and sexist practices because collectively, at different sites of contestation, they engaged in centering the self to disrupt the process of victimization.

The study reconceptualizes resistance. It includes as collective resistance the many individual acts women engaged in to affirm their strengths and call upon their social histories to challenge oppressive practices. Resistance includes multiple and concrete actions, as I discussed in Chapters VII and VIII, that systematically addressed issues of racism and changed public policies and practices in many areas, chiefly in education and housing. Moreover, these Caribbean women's acts of resistance transformed the identities of visible minority women. Caribbean women played a central role in the establishment of one of the largest women's organization in Canada—the National Congress of Black Women of Canada and its multiple chapters in several cities of this country. This organization is a vehicle for Caribbean women to emphasize a refusal to be dominated at
various organizational levels that oppress them. These women demonstrate they can contest public policies and practices that are discriminatory to racialized women and other groups alike at all levels of government, health and education institutions, social service agencies and so on. Resistance activities of Caribbean women in Canada were diverse but all were inspired by learning at home. It was a memory of home that taught them to meet multiple challenges of life. Similarly in disparate locations in Canada they re-enacted this learning in their different approaches to community activism. This study recognizes the uniqueness of home as an educative institution. Caribbean migrant women in Canada remember home and re-imagine it in various ways as a site where adults resisted in order to survive. In spite of our understanding of home as a site of contestations and contradictions for people in general it predominates in the imaginations of these Caribbean women as a site of learning.

This study affirms that we can reflect on how and where we learned to survive, and to recognize the many components, that centralize the educational setting of home. It also convinces us that learning to survive is connected to histories of oppressions and to the ways in which communities subordinated and exploited by hegemonic powers are sustained. Because it is through the interconnected histories of Caribbean women in my study, we come to know these women have been constructed to take up a legacy of learning to produce acts of anti-subordination towards systems of imperialism. As we can see from this study, they organized resistance activities around issues which affect the community in general. Yet, ultimately the study found that a display of a Caribbean brand of feminism was much more possible when an alternative women's movement emerged. This movement, in its separateness from the mainstream women's movement, is the key
to recovery of the power of woman-driven approaches Caribbean women learned to construct at the learning site—home. Hence, these Caribbean women in this study remind us that we can reconstruct this site, called home, in our everyday world when we accept resistance as a particular strength and purpose in our imagination. Survival, for the Caribbean women in my study was due primarily to strategies of resistance, which were mainly manifested in education, networking and community activism. These were the areas, in which I discussed the use of an ethic of independence. This ethic contains a moral value to enhance strengths of self-esteem, assertiveness and self-reliance. It serves as a driving force to motivate these Caribbean women to respond to domination. The courage to use independence in order to engage continuously in forms of resistance comes from knowing the social history of one's background, and of being prepared always to critically analyze ongoing experiences.

In other words, we look to experience for direction, yet we have to be mindful of its definition, as I discussed in Chapter II. As Bannerji (1992) and Scott (1992) inform us, experience is socially produced but we have to investigate how history has positioned us to come to know ourselves. An individual woman, having reached that point in self-definition perseveres with her particular kind of courage to sustain that sense of who she wants to be; what beliefs she holds around social justice; and what reserves she can foster and use to counter vulnerability. It is in this role of self-analyst, a woman can induce her needs to gain a sense of control, which is the opposite of powerlessness or victimhood. The centering of the self so that she can organize politically in groups, or individually to resist dominant ideologies are contributions to social change, as Caribbean women in this study have done. These acts of resistance do not exclude the fact that no one can be free from conditioning. According to Fanon (1967)
it would not be uncommon for the colonized to internalize some of the values of the colonizer. However, when she understands and knows, that she as an individual, a woman, who has every right to be empowered the use of the ethic of independence is activated to respond to oppressions. This ethic while it is not subsumed by other values, such as nurturing, is a means of preserving self-dignity, and is often highly apparent when women may become sensitive to the predicament that any form of domination places on our lives and those of others in communities.

**How we can use this study.** This study can be used as an educative tool. That is, first, it can provide instructions to young women particularly, in the histories of Caribbean older women's initiatives of survival as immigrants. It can help educational professionals to emphasise to young women students that there is a history of resistance of Caribbean women in Canada exemplified in personal responsibility and community organizing. In other words, the next generation needs to be informed about the courage of these Caribbean women in my study. These stories show others how to use instruments of survival and enable students to grasp the meaning of resistance. Caribbean women in this study demonstrate that they had the power to contribute to social change in several institutions, including school boards, hospitals, banks, social service agencies, law enforcement, to name but a few. The significance of their acts is enhanced because of their memories that home had taught them, and how they imagined their learning resistance there could support redefinitions of themselves to re-enact home in Canada. These are the critical facts that are needed in school curricular for social studies as well as gender studies.
In addition this study has a place in reforming the ways that education considers home. For instance, in this study the concept of home as an educative institution encompasses links with history, family and community. Home is conceptualized within a framework that embraces histories of women's resistance in the Caribbean. Historical resistance introduced the idea of an ongoing legacy among older Caribbean women who brought up families to resist is the other link. Another is how the image of home conjures the idea of family to engage in and establish community. This is the point of departure that gives home its uniqueness. Home appears in our minds when we need something upon which to survive. School Boards that are concerned about the methods required to integrate parents and community into school administration and curriculum development can use this broader understanding of home in these initiatives. With its embrace of community, home may be considered as a complementary institution to school. The study endorses that home teaching has valuable inputs for the inclusive curriculum. Home can help students not only focus on self, but centre on the strengths that emerge from this site to provide an understanding of resistance. Students can gain knowledge to design strategies to cope with ongoing demands to accept responsibility for themselves. Students can connect to tutors readily.

My hope for this study is that it brings new understanding of Caribbean women as agents in community organizing: as "rebels and spitfires" who resist race, class and gender domination. These are women who help us not only to imagine but to create a better world.

ENDNOTES

1. Standard English translation: I, of course, do know who I am.
2. I am not making obscure or minimizing the holocaust of slavery which lasted for over three centuries, brutalizing the physical and psychical being of several generations of African people. It is not my intention to equalize the experiences of domination of the colonized. My idea is to stress that the white elite established a hegemony which throughout colonialism always suppressed the identities of the masses who were both indigenous to the Caribbean or largely brought in forced migration, and who were constantly subordinated to imperialism. In other words, masses of people other than the elite, with roots in Europe, struggled to preserve who they believed they were or to recreate new environments for themselves in this overarching hegemony.

3. This is the way I interpret Aunt Georgie's instruction to me, when she said, she never allowed a week to pass without listing the things she used to fight for survival, and she would tick those that "got her troo" and cross out those that gave her problems.

4. This idea connects with George Dei's (1994) conclusion of his study of the activities of Ghanaian women in agriculture. He argued that these women's use of "little used subsistence strategies" in agriculture are responses to severe economic recession in Ghana and are significant to social change. Women of a Ghanaian village. African Studies Review 37(2): 121-145.

Multiple Identities of Caribbean Women
CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S HERITAGES

SINGLE

1. Mixed race 2. East Indian
5. Jamaican

COMBINATIONS

1. African/European
2. African/Mixed Race
3. African/European/Portuguese
4. Mixed Race/East Indian
5. African/Amerindian
6. European/Mixed Race
7. European/Mixed Race/East Indian/Chinese/Carib
8. African/Maroon
9. African/Carib
10. European/Mixed Race/African/Amerindian
11. European/Mixed Race/East Indian/Chinese/Portuguese/Carib
12. African/Maroon
13. African/Carib
15. African/Portuguese
16. European/Mixed Race/East Indian/African/Syrian-Lebanese/Amerindian
17. Mixed Race/Portuguese/Amerindian
18. European/Mixed Race/Amerindian
19. European/Mixed Race
20. East Indian/African/Carib/Coco-Pagnol
APPENDIX II

CARIBBEAN WOMEN:

self-definitions

When I asked the Caribbean women in my study to define themselves, they replied with these statements. I therefore use them as introductions to the reader. I have not given the actual names of these women except my own. I use these names when I speak about them or quote them in the text. The heritages listed with each quotation, are those selected by the women to complete a demographic profile form, which they were asked to do before the interview began.

Abena: African "I have always identified myself as a Black feminist activist, because given my experience, I can be nothing but feminist, I have worked along women and the struggle of women for so long. I have worked with five generations of people. You are looking at someone who have worked with five generations of men. I would have worked with five generations of people in the struggle and I am only ...years old! You say to yourself what else can you do! As I identified more and more with the gay community, I could feel them [black community] turning away and treating me with more and more disdain. I don't know, they who had relied on me for such a long time for support."

Abike: European; Chinese; African "Having emigrated to Canada and lived in residence, I kind of acculturated to Canada in many aspects of my life, but in many other aspects of my life, I have found my own way. For instance, building on my Caribbean roots, and having identified myself as Black, irrespective of the white father in the background, I took specific steps to know more about what I consider to be my culture. I made my pilgrimage, I went all over West and East Africa. When I look in the mirror, my dominant physical characteristics are African in origin, the textures, my physical and facial characteristics, my build, and my whole orientation is African. When I study my own modus operandi, it is in keeping with some of the original traditions of sharing, of looking after the collectivity, of looking after the community, of being part of a group. I am married to a Black man, who is from Nigeria, but born of Guyanese parents...his father was a Black nationalist and so am I, a Black nationalist and PanAfricanist."

Aita: African "I define myself first and foremost as a Black woman, not narrowly bound in terms of nationalist ideology, and I don't see myself so much as a PanAfricanist because PanAfricanism has its place. Just as I say that I grow up and I see all that goes on, is just so we have a sense of our power. It wait until it comes to North America for it to come to fruition, but we are powerful, and can be powerful, and nothing en go stop us if we put our mind to doing something."
Alice: African; Amerindian-Carib "I think I became Caribbean when I came to Canada. I left thinking I was Canadian and then I came to Canada thinking I was Caribbean. And that was interesting, meeting women from Jamaica or Trinidad or Barbados or, not Trinidad since my family earlier lived in Grenada and Trinidad, but from Barbados and those places and having a sense that, you know, we came from the same cultural basis. Ya that, once I became a Caribbean woman, and so I think I have to acknowledge that there are very many women from all over the Caribbean and men who played a part in who I am now."

Amanda: European; Mixed race"I am a Trinidadian. I still consider myself a Trinidadian, but the changes taking place in Trinidad-the crime-I don't think I would want to live there."

Anne: African "I see myself as a Black female, still Caribbean even though I have spent more time here than I have spent in the Caribbean, I still identify very strongly with my Caribbean roots, you know, I see myself as very much a really conscious of what's going here in Canada, and I am living it on a daily basis, working in a mainstream organization. I see myself, not as arrived, I haven't arrived anywhere. I see myself in a position to make a contribution, and I can make a contribution to those people in my community, either by seeking them out, because of the position I am in, hiring them, or making sure that they are hired. I see myself as a spokesperson for them especially when we are talking about policies. I see myself, being able to help others, and also as a voice really, because we have very few Blacks who really get promoted to directors, or managers, where they have impact on policies and decisions."

Annzinga: European; Portuguese; African "I found that I didn't have difficulty mobilizing people...and it is something people talk about, they talk about in the sense that they think I have the skill or ability. But I am not conscious about it. I guess it is part of my reluctance in talking because I don't put labels on myself. I don't see what people see in me. This definition of my self-what does that mean?...there is a finality to that...I hear people introduce themselves as an activist, I don't know. Definitely I would say I am a Black woman, I am a Caribbean woman. I am very much a Black woman from Trinidad, that's who I am-that's where my roots, my culture, my outlook, whatever...I have not found anything in Canadian culture that would make me give up Trinidadian culture. Because of so much what I talked to before had to do with work that I did, when people ask the question you usually think about a political activity."

Aretha: Mixed race; African "I have a bit of a struggle with that (identity), because when I became a Canadian citizen, it was very very emotional for me, as I had difficulty letting go of Trinidad/Tobagonian. I did not realize how nationalistic I was, so I always think Trinidad & Tobago first, then Canada afterwards. Black woman is important for political reasons in this country. I announce that in a loud voice, there is no need to doubt it, I walk in you should see that I am black. I am Canadian of Trinidad & Tobago origin, I say on the job, but deep down inside I am a very Caribbean woman. I am here enjoying what Canada has to offer, but I have given very much to Canada so there is reciprocity, and Canada should accept what this Caribbean woman is giving of herself to it. I am a Caribbean woman living in Canada!"
Ariel: Mixed race; African  "Woman-African origins, with some European blood-ties, or whatever you want to call it. In terms of identity I see myself as a Black African."

Bianca: Mixed race  "Primarily, I am a grandmother, a mother and a Black woman. I talk about myself as a Caribbean woman but I am also a Jamaican woman. As well, I am a citizen of Canada. Funny for the length of time I live here, with all my family, and others who are important to me, but deep down I can't say here is home. I still talk about home as Jamaica. I am a Human Rights activist, a Trade Unionist and a human being, who with all these different parts make me who I am."

Cheryl: East Indian  "I know that sometimes that people behind the politicians have more power than the people upfront. Maybe it is not my personality to be a upfront politician, I can do more behind the scenes, okay, and that's why I didn't want to be upfront, and I wasn't ready for it, I am a private person too in so many ways, and then my writing was always in the back of my mind. I work as a community worker for my bread, and I enjoy doing it, but my passion in life, what I would like to do one of these days is to sit and just write, you know. But it is really hard for us, for reasons I don't have to tell you, so I rather work in the background. I had opportunities to do that, but I was disillusioned because what I saw: the racism, the sexism, you know, the ignorance and the games. I wanted to seem to be a Canadian-a citizen of this country, not just a little, something by the wayside. You know I felt one of the ways in which you can seem to belong more is if you act, you know, and let the public see that you are just not interested in race relations and equity issues, which a lot of minorities do, and especially the Caribbean people because they started the whole issue for fighting for equity. You don't want to seem to belong to this and to seem to be doing a limited type of activity. I wanted to embrace everything."

Clarita: African  "I'm a mother and a social worker and this and that, I'm a daughter, I'm a sister etc. etc., I'm a friend to one or two people. I don't think that I can define myself as any of these things without putting Trinidad in front of it... I'm saying that when even as I hear of some of the unfortunate things that happen in Trinidad, I think they're unfortunate, but it doesn't terminate a desire to go home."

Daisy: European; African  "I think I could say that I see myself as a strong black woman. I did not always see myself as strong but then, because I was always thrown into situations as I mentioned before where I had to speak up, then people see me as strong and people tell me I'm strong, so I think that is strength for myself. And I think you have to be yourself, and you have to... I think I have a deep faith and a deep trust in God, and I think that is what helps see me through a lot of things because things weren't always easy and smooth flowing even when we came here to a black congregation."

Doreen: African  "I was a part of and still part of the "Assembly of Spiritual Awareness", that is, we deal with the spiritual...the authentic part of our ancestors' spiritual tradition where we believe there is a God, you believe in your ancestors, and in the method of their spiritual worship, not the distorted way that Europeans projected us.
I know with me, the more, the greater the challenge... I do not know where I get the energy, I do not know where I get the strength but the fighting spirit is within me. We are the key to the survival of the African race in the Caribbean, the women, the strength that we have. When the men will get a little downhearted, the women will fight relentlessly. We have that determination, that inner strength!"

Fern: Chinese "I am me. I think I am unique with my background and with my life. I treasure my background in Trinidad and Tobago. I think I have got the best of both worlds."

Haniffa: East Indian "I am a Black woman. My roots are Caribbean, Guyanese. I hold both Guyanese and Canadian citizenship. My sense of religion is Islam. I grew up in an environment where all religions were equally celebrated and I have a high degree of respect for people's preference and choice of religion. This experience developed a strong sense of community and family responsibility in addition to my home family. I consider myself to be a Black woman. I also prescribe to the definition of 'black' as you indicated. I do not think that one can be outside the black and white definition. You are either black or white, you cannot be blackish, brown, or yellow. Your racial group is not the colour—it is your political, economic and social bias that identifies if you are black or white."

Kamla: East Indian "I think I am a person, who came from a humble beginning I continue to feel that way. I am a humble person, no matter where I go, what I do, or where I am. I am very ambitions. My goal would be to do my own business. I really like people, I am a people-person. I have things going for myself. I think the reason that I am successful is that I like people, helping, talking to them. I help personally or professionally. I would like to be looked upon as one of those kinds of individuals: a people-person. I want to say that the Black community does not include people like myself, and I consider myself a Caribbean woman, I consider myself a Black person, I may not be black in the sense as one refers to it in this continent, but I am not White. When you reflect on who you are and what you are and where you fit into this society, people like us are not identified in any form or fashion, because you have the Whites, and you have the Caribbeans who will talk about "Black", well what's the Black, I feel people like us are left out."

Kim: Chinese (none received)

Lauretta: European; East Indian; African; Amerindian; Jew "I see my self as a child of God, and I get my strength from being a child of God, and my direction. A daughter out of the Caribbean who would like to work towards, and is working towards the harmonious co-existence of people."

Lena: African "I look at myself as a person who made good use of my background, because I discovered that there was richness in my Caribbean upbringing. I am a woman who is not bitter from the experiences that I considered negative in my life. They were not negative, now that I reflect, they were part of my process, part of my life processes that you must go through if you are going to survive. Some of the things I found difficult have brought character and strength, and we know that we have made a contribution. I know
that I made a contribution from what people tell me. There is nobody, wherever I go in Toronto, who does not know me for that name, and the only reason is because of the work that I did, and the contribution I made. My name is connected to Black Theatre Canada, and that to me is a great compliment. I know the work which was created was very meaningful. But I really loved to be a teacher. I never became one, but in a sense I am one, now I know that looking back, teachers are not only those who go to the school and teach. You become a teacher also by sharing."

**Lucinda: European; Mixed race; African**  "I am an individual and I am proud of who I am as a woman, and I don't make the colour, black or white; light or brown, English or African take away anything from me as an individual. My identity is I am a black, mixed race individual who come out of many cultural and good people and when I look at who I am, most of all I am a human being and next thing I am a woman. That is something nobody can take away from me."

**Mabel: African**  "I am conscious of my blackness, and my identity. I don't take life seriously. Experiences shaped by my travel in Tanzania for three years, and Nigeria for four years, and then coming from the Caribbean. I feel I have a very wide worldview that I could put my experiences in. Community, that is, family and friends and others, is very important to me because it gives me a sense of belonging and helps to keep me going."

**Marilyn: Chinese**  "I am proud to be Trinidadian. I do not see myself as Caribbean because I have never seen the Caribbean except going to Barbados. I have to tell everybody, because they look at me and the say 'you have an accent' they expect me to sound like a Hong Kong Chinese, or somebody else. I am from Trinidad! I know my feelings, because when I go home, I love the mountains I feel I am at home, I love the water! When I hear the steelband my heart goes...if I hear the bass I cry!" I am a daughter, that is very important to me. I am a daughter, a mother and a 'me' after. I was brought to be last. This is the way with Orientals. We are taught to be quiet, submissive, passive. I always put myself last. I am trying to overcome that feeling but it is difficult."

**Marise: Mixed race; Portuguese; African**  "I think that, for me, there is no cultural community on the planet I feel comfortable with, because I think that all cultural definitions have come out of the colonialist heritage which is patriarchal, heterosexual, you-name-it, and for women, like myself, and possibly men, it is very difficult to identify by any existing definitions, which have come from the organization of nation States and the European colonialist background. That is a problem for me and it is a problem for me in joining culturally defined groups from the Caribbean. And there is the difficulty accessing groups which exist because I am a lesbian, and many are male-dominated. You only have two choices, go in and accept domination or stay out!"

**Maya: African**  "I want people to see me as a Black feminist. What does that mean, for me, it is a case of seeing me more as a person, describe me in words, in terms of my character, things that I stand for, and what I actually do, will be more valuable to me than giving myself a label, as a character, I can say I am a person of integrity, I believe I have a sense
of commitment to my blackness and to being a woman, and to strive for freedom not only for myself as a Black woman, but for other women, and in fact for everybody who is oppressed: to value people and to work for the better humankind, and to get rid of the oppressions we experience, this is where my commitment lies."

**Naomi:** *African; European* "I am a Caribbean Black Woman. I don’t want to be called an African Canadian, because it was made clear to me that it is wrong for us from the Caribbean to call ourselves African. Although I have lived in Canada all these years, I still hold on to Barbados, because it is my cultural background from which I drew the strength to live here. I don’t want to ever give up the cultural things which made me who I am: a Barbadian with Canadian citizenship, a piece of the mosaic. This way I get a sense of comparison, which I pass on to my children to define their way of living. Comparison helps them to make choices. They know what Barbados stands for and can understand and respect people who belong there and put Canada and Barbados together. Call me a Black woman from the West Indies!"

**Nikki:** *European; African* I want others to see me as a very fair person, as a person who can listen to both sides of a story and come to a conclusion with a balance. I want people to see me as a warm person and I know I sometimes don’t give the impression of warmth. I see myself as a Black woman, yet, I still see myself in a number of ways as a woman from the Caribbean. As I was saying there must be some European, because the grandfather that I knew was very fair, if you look at my hair! When I look at his side of his family there is a range of light skinned to white."

**Nisa:** *European; Mixed race; African* "I am all-Jamaican!"

**Olive:** *European; African* "One of the things I know that I do, that I am, very interesting, I am a connector and I am connected. It seems to me that I am all the time-everything I do I want to bring other people into it, or every time I hear about something I think to myself—I wonder if I can help make an opportunity for somebody there. So that is being connected and connector, and that there is that thing about helping people. There is no doubt in my mind about being a Caribbean woman, I think the high school girl thing, the being my father’s daughter thing, all of that makes be a certain kind of person. As well, I am a dreamer, I dream all the time. I love to tell stories. I love to sing calypso."

**Radika:** *Mixed race; East Indian; African; Amerindian* "So our first three weeks in Canada, we are in the hotel alone, and my Mom looking for jobs and our Indo-Trinidadian friends mostly inviting us to their homes just to show off. So today when I identify mostly with the Black people of my community, the African side of my community, it is because I find that the people in the African side, for me, have been more caring, supportive and not having pretension of hypocrisy about them. So that it was why I say that I am Black, I don’t want to be called anything but a Black woman, because to me that’s the identity I require."

**Rebeka:** *European; Mixed race; Amerindian* "As a Black Caribbean woman, I like to think of myself as somebody who is open to learning things, who can gain clarity about
what my strengths are, and what my contributions might be in the world. The direction I would like to go in and continue is one where I am working on issues of change and challenging the status quo. It doesn’t always happen, but this is something I feel that as a Caribbean person and knowing the experience of colonialism, imperialism, as a woman knowing the experience of sexism and as a Black person, knowing the experience of racism, these are not about life, but about death, suppression, and down pressing that what I would want my life to be is something to open that up, to remove it, so that you have a life, you are flourishing, you have joy and ability to contribute to whatever you want to so. That is what I want to be thought of as."

Rosetta: Mixed race; Black; Chinese; East Indian; White "I can’t remember how I identified myself so I think I’ll identify myself more clearly for you. My name is really, in transition also, I’m thinking in terms of my identity I was named by some African friends I think ten or more years, more then ten years ago. I was named M… and I had a naming ceremony, and I recently, I thought about it off and on, I recently thought to officially or legally change my name. And M…means 'I have found the one I love.' And I would like to use my African name as part of my identity, in terms of my writing; I would like to write and do independent research, and I would like to be known by my African name. Because for me it embodies my roots, that I started, I think seriously searching when I was quite young.'

Rowena: European; Mixed race; East Indian; African; Syrian-Lebanese; Amerindian "I never identified myself first by my sexual orientation, that just happened by the wayside-no that sounds trivial, because the experience of it is a political one. That is not my focal identity, I mean, I identify myself as a Caribbean woman. I would say in the eighties I identified and called myself a Black woman. As I say more and more that women were claiming a racial identity for example, … was called "Black and Women of Colour", that was a sort of umbrella term used, which encompassed all women. Now me is a woman of mixed race, so I feel it would be stupid of me to dredge up any one of those and claim it for myself because if I refer to myself as an Afro-Caribbean woman, people would laugh me out and I would laugh myself out! I have come across some little stiff times in dealing with some of my Black sisters, who kind of want to treat me scabby because I is light-skinned and middle class. Then they would proceed to identify me for myself, but I had decided a long time ago that nobody was going to create an identity for me, and that I would be who I am-I am a mixed race, middle class woman."

Simone: European; Portuguese; Africa "Yes I’m a Canadian. Very much a Canadian. I feel…I love this city. I love it. I’ve never been one of those who moan and groan about Canada. I even like winter. I love where I came from. I feel it has made me a strong person to survive in North America. I wonder what it would have been like if I had grown up here. Whether I would have had such a strong sense of myself that…I never feel that anyone is better than me. In fact I usually feel that I am so much further ahead than many born here. I don’t even presume to think that I am a victim. I’ve never walked around feeling like a victim. I’ve never been stopped anywhere I want to go. I believe a Canadian is anybody who so identifies him/herself."
Saida: Jamaican  "I'm just a plain, ordinary down to earth person. Me, I'm Black anyway. Me I'm Black, and I'm a Jamaican. If they want to call me African go ahead! I was born in Jamaica and that's the only thing I know. And I still say I'm a Jamaican. And if I have to say anything I would say I'm of Cuban descent because my father's from Cuba. But my mother's a Jamaican also so I just stick to Jamaican."

Sastra: East Indian  "I have a struggle with the immigrant women group I now support, that is, calling ourselves "visible and immigrant minority women". I struggle out of the question: How long will we have this title? Will we ever feel we are Canadian of Caribbean ancestry-wherever we are from? I am told by my friends just by having that title it gives people a sense of power, sense of purpose. I respect what they say, but argue that if I call myself "an immigrant woman" the word itself does not connote power. I was resisting that- "Don't call me that," I'd say, I come from Guyana and I want an opportunity to organize and contribute to my community. So I have always had this internal struggle: Who am I in Canada? I had to take the agency for everything I got involved in-the first move or the last move, nobody came looking for me, I had to take that initiative. So I felt I have used both the experience I have internalized, as I was socialized by my mother as well as my aunt and the belonging to community groups."

Sumanta: East Indian/South Asian  "Well, now I definitely describe myself as Indo-Caribbean, Trinidadian, or woman of colour depending on the context I am in. When my organizing is happening in different areas too. In the past two years I have been conscious of being an Indo-Caribbean, and I have been trying to organize in that area, and trying to assert that identity, in a specific way, as I am on the Board of … and I try to push that identity of Indo-Caribbean."

Toni: African; Amerindian; Jew  "I define a little different here-I define I am a woman, and my mother's daughter, I don't even think of being my father's daughter, because she is a blend and a mixture of so many things. I think I identify with being very Jamaican, being Caribbean but I identify with being a woman. I think of myself as being Canadian, because I have a Canadian child, but I think of it as something transient because I really think of myself as an international woman. If I don't enjoy Canada anymore, I see no reason why I can't pack my bags and go off to somewhere else, as I think I have no limited boundaries. This isn't it. I could go where I am needed. Jamaica is my nucleus, but being this kind of bastardized mixture, because now that I am here, I never valued the native part of me as it was devalued in the Caribbean. I value it very much now. I value my Jewish grandmother, my Black grandmother, my Arab... and I don't care if nobody else sees it ...I value the fact that I am a woman. Jamaican yes! woman first, but to hell if I contribute something to Canada and Canada does not want me, I will give it to somebody else."

Usha: East Indian  "I have not grown with restriction and yet I know who I am, I am not African, I am not Chinese I am not English, but I know where my roots are and I know I would not like to go to India and marry an Indian man, I am a Caribbean woman! What is a Caribbean woman? She is a pepper-pot, and I think I got quite a lot of pepper in me too!"
Vanessa: European; Mixed race; African; Amerindian "I consider myself to be Canadian of Caribbean heritage. I am proud of my sensitivity to AGE. I believe that heritage has contributed to my sensitivity of other cultures and my understanding of diversity. I also believe that my family influences have contributed to my confidence and sense of security. These early influences have played a part in whatever achievements that I have gained over the years."

Yaa: African "For me, I see myself as an African-Caribbean woman, I see myself as coming from a strong line of Black woman. It has given me powerful tools to cope with a very rough life. I never had any idea that Canada would turn out to be a hell hole that it is. Well, there were good times too, but! I see myself as not an individual. I don't see myself as the "I"-"Me"-"YAA". I see myself as very much connected to a community, often times what I feel and what I do isn't in a vacuum, it is from a Caribbean or Black community, even so I made a conscious decision that any work that I do is within a Caribbean community, and that is why I am at ... I see myself as taking on struggles, I try to balance my work with women's issues and youth and children's. I feel if I were to stop doing that work, I would wither up and die. It is very integral to my survival and to my peace of mind."

Yelena: European; Mixed race; East Indian; Chinese; Portuguese; Carib "I claim a Caribbean identity. I claim Trini, I don't say Caribbean, I say Trini, because that is a separate piece of the Caribbean. Being Jamaican, or being Bajan, or Trini is being different things, although we all come from the Caribbean. But, I also acknowledge the privilege of access that I have of being mixed race at this time. I have to acknowledge what I have. I can quite easily let myself be exoticized which happens a lot, and try not to let it happen. Now I have access into the Vietnamese community, Korean, Japanese-any community of colour that other workers do not have."

Yvonne: African; Carib; Indian; Coco-Panyol "I am an independent woman striving to live my life like a prayer. I want to experience some harmony among people. I am a sister, a friend, an auntie and a godmother. I am woman-centred coming from a Caribbean social-cultural framework of 'women-looking-out-for-women'. My Caribeannes springs from the connection which I make to a history of struggle and recreation of cultures. I have a sense of diversity which stems from the location of Trinidad and Tobago, a place I specifically call home."

Zindzi: African "Whatever name they call me: consultant, educator, activist and now professor-I am really a teacher at heart, rooted in African soil, nurtured by the sun of small Caribbean islands and coming to full personhood in cities all over the world."

Zora: African "So I see myself as what we used to say a Black woman in Canada, but now an African-Canadian woman. So I don't necessarily, I mean I do not want to find out about Guyana alone, that is I can't get myself caught up in that area only. I'm a Guyanese so I'm
not a Jamaican and I'm not a Trinidadian and whatever, you know. I feel that we sort of all belong together?"
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