Business Association for introducing me to Vincentian traffickers and providing me with insight into their trading activities.

In Dominica I thank Small Projects Assistance Team for arranging my accomodation and making their resources available to me. I am extremely grateful for the assistance and support of Cecil Joseph and Heather Ogaro of the Dominica Hucksters' Association. The experience and knowledge they shared with me made an invaluable contribution to this research.

The life experiences of the hucksters and traffickers of St. Vincent and Dominica form the basis of this thesis. To all these women who participated in this research and shared the details of their lives with me, I extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. This thesis is dedicated to them and their ongoing struggle for survival and autonomy.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Keith Nurse, who shared the entire research process with me. Thank you for bringing the Caribbean and its people into my life.

National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

**WOMEN AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION:
THE INTER-ISLAND TRADERS OF AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCE IN THE CARIBBEAN**

by

ANTHEA MULAKALA, B.A. HONS.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

April 25, 1991

copyright

1991, Anthea Mulakala

National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-70928-6

Canada

The undersigned hereby recommend to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of this thesis,
submitted by Antnea Mulakala, in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Christopher J. Maule, Director
The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Professor F. Mackenzie, Supervisor

Carleton University

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the inter-island trade of agricultural produce carried out by hucksters and traffickers in the English-speaking Caribbean. It utilizes a feminist political economy approach to trace the evolution of the trade, and women's involvement in it, from the slavery period to the current crisis. The central argument of the thesis is that huckstering as an activity and a survival strategy for an increasing number of Caribbean women, represents a creative and indigenous response to economic crisis and offers long term developmental potential both for the region and the status of Caribbean women. The thesis also presents a case study which details the experiences of thirty women traders from St. Vincent and Dominica.

The findings of the research suggest that the inter-island trade is a source of empowerment and self-esteem for the women who participate in it. Furthermore, the trade provides income for many women in Caribbean society who would otherwise be unemployed. The research also suggests that while the trade has developmental potential for the region, this potential is being lost as externally propelled development models continue to be pursued.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people whose time, energy and support have contributed to this thesis. First I would like to thank my family and friends for their constant encouragement and support. I also owe a great deal to my inlaws and friends in the Caribbean who hosted and took special care of me during my year in the region.

The insights and guidance of my supervisor, Fiona Mackenzie, have contributed significantly to this research. I thank her for her encouragement, criticisms, patience and especially her time. I would also like to thank my advisor, Jared Keil, for his support and assistance and Rosina Wiltshire for supervising my research in the Caribbean.

I am also grateful to The Canadian International Development Agency and the Canadian Bureau for International Education for the funding that made this research possible.

There are a number of people and organizations in the Caribbean that assisted in this research and deserve special thanks. In Trinidad I would like to thank Stephen Lee Pow for giving up his weekend to assist me in the editing of my video.

In St. Vincent I thank Mike Browne and the Adult Education Programme of the St. Vincent Union of Teachers for hosting me and for going to great lengths to facilitate my research. I also greatly appreciate the contribution and efforts of Norman Pemberton and the Traffickers Small

Business Association for introducing me to Vincentian traffickers and providing me with insight into their trading activities.

In Dominica I thank Small Projects Assistance Team for arranging my accomodation and making their resources available to me. I am extremely grateful for the assistance and support of Cecil Joseph and Heather Ogaro of the Dominica Hucksters' Association. The experience and knowledge they shared with me made an invaluable contribution to this research.

The life experiences of the hucksters and traffickers of St. Vincent and Dominica form the basis of this thesis. To all these women who participated in this research and shared the details of their lives with me, I extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. This thesis is dedicated to them and their ongoing struggle for survival and autonomy.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Keith Nurse, who shared the entire research process with me. Thank you for bringing the Caribbean and its people into my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
List of Maps	viii
 Preface	 1
 INTRODUCTION	 2
Research Task	10
 CHAPTER ONE: Theoretical Framework	 16
The Dominant Paradigm	17
Feminist Political Economy and the Study of Caribbean Hucksters	30
 CHAPTER TWO: Research Methodology	 62
 CHAPTER THREE: The Historical and Gender Dimensions of the West Indian Informal Economy	 87
The Nature of Caribbean Economies	88
The Plantation Economy and the Origins of the Trade	89
Emancipation and the Development of the West Indian Peasantry	103
The Twentieth Century: Diversification, Urbanization and the Neglect of Agriculture	113
Post World War II Development: Pouring Old Wine into New Bottles	123
The Formal-Informal Relationship: Disharmonious Development	132
 CHAPTER FOUR: The Inter-Island Trade in the Contemporary West Indian Political Economy	 136
The Model in Crisis Since 1970	136
The Formal Response	137
The Informal Response	140
Dimensions of the Informal Trade in the Current Period	141

CHAPTER FIVE: The Rigours of the Trade: Survival and Success as Inter-Island Traders from St. Vincent and Dominica	156
St. Vincent and Dominica:	
The Region's Backyard Gardens	158
The Historical Legacy of Export Dependency	162
The Traffickers of St. Vincent	172
The Dominican Hucksters	174
The Traders' Activity Cycle	178
Problems	190
Organizing for Survival	203
CHAPTER SIX: The Inter-Island Trade and Women's Lives	220
The Decision to Become an Inter-Island Trader:	
The Choice Amongst Limited Options	221
The Invisible Skill Bank: Life Experience	233
The Balancing Act: The Reordering and Restructuring of Gender Relations	240
Empowerment	259
CHAPTER SEVEN: Looking Ahead	265
The Historical Legacy: The Sameness Within the Changingness	268
Barriers to an Alternative Strategy	274
The Result: The Shift to Informal Commercial Importing	280
Empowerment vs Transformation	281
Future Prospects: Crisis and Change	285
Conscientization	289
AFTERWORD: Feminist Political Economy and its Potential for Research in the Social Sciences	294
APPENDIX: Trader Profiles	300
BIBLIOGRAPHY	315

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
1	General Worker Rates by Sex in Commonwealth Caribbean 1891-1980	109
2	Estimated Production of Selected Commodities 1981-1985	174
3	Percentage Distribution of Economic Inactivity by Country, Age-Group and Sex	228

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
1	Traders' Activity Cycle	177

LIST OF MAPS

MAPS	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
1	Geographical Movement of Traders	6
2	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	15
3	Dominica	17

PREFACE

The idea for this research came to me one day in Trinidad as my husband Keith and I were driving down the highway. At the time we were discussing my various research interests, attempting to decide on a topic. I knew I wanted to focus on a gender issue and that I was interested in areas of women's work that are often marginalized, such as their activities in the informal sector. I also desired to do research in the Caribbean. Though I am not West Indian, my husband is, and it was important to me to learn more about this region and its culture which have had a significant impact on my life. As we were driving, my eyes caught sight of a woman selling fresh produce by the roadside. As we continued to drive I noticed more of these women. I asked Keith about them. He told me they were called hucksters and from that point on I knew I had found a research topic.

INTRODUCTION

Corinne is a Dominican woman in her mid-forties who has earned her living as a huckster for the last twenty-eight years. Corinne was raised in a poor family and left school at an early age to support herself. She met her husband when she was eighteen years old and they have been together since then. She and her husband have eight children. From early on Corinne was concerned about how to secure a comfortable life for herself and her family. When she was in her early twenties, Corinne, with two children and little money to support them, began trading as a huckster to Antigua. Back then she would often be away from home for three weeks at a time, travelling on wooden boats over rough waters. While away she relied on her husband and other relatives to mind her children. Presently she travels weekly to Guadeloupe with boxes of ground provisions¹, plantains, citrus and spices which she sells in the French markets. Two of her children who have followed in her footsteps also make the weekly journey.

Her schedule is hectic and gruelling -- seven days a week, eighteen hours a day. On Sundays she buys, packs, loads and ships her produce from Dominica to Guadeloupe. On Monday she travels to Guadeloupe, collects her load, clears

¹ The term "ground provisions" refers to root crops and tubers such as yams, cassava, dasheen, tannias and eddoes which are staple foods in the region.

customs and often sells for a few hours. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are spent selling in the market. Friday she packs, stores or bargains her surplus produce, purchases potatoes, onions, garlic and other items for sale at home, changes her money and departs for Dominica. On Saturday she sells her Guadeloupe produce in the Dominican market. Saturday evening, after cooking for her family and cleaning her home, she may find time to relax.

Though her work does not receive the recognition it deserves, Corinne is proud of it because through huckstering she has built herself a house, purchased a vehicle and educated all her children. Her income has also allowed her husband to be a stay-at-home spouse. Though she feels the work is quite "terrible," Corinne says she will continue to huckster for as long as she is able.

It has been the characteristic tendency of much "women and development" literature on huckstering to draw attention to women's activities, to affirm positively the work that they do and prescribe measures which improve women's condition by targeting ameliorative resources to them. While the importance of such research cannot be denied, it is the intention of this thesis to go beyond this analysis and question how the form and nature of women's work responds to and is shaped by the everchanging socioeconomic environment. In particular, this research parts from the existing literature on the inter-island trade

by situating the activity within a global context and examining the links between international political economy, the nation-state or region, and the household, both historically and in the present. This approach reveals the trade as an integral element of Caribbean political economies which has developed and changed overtime in response to the political and economic situation facing the region. The underlying argument of this thesis is that huckstering, as an activity and a survival strategy for an increasing number of women, represents a creative, indigenous response to a global system in crisis and offers long term developmental potential both for the region and the status of Caribbean women. Though the trade dates back to the pre-colonial Caribbean it has been marginalized throughout the region's history and its developmental potential has been stifled. Instead, externally propelled and imported development models have been pursued which have failed to address the needs of regional and human development. In the wake of the current crisis facing the region the search for indigenous development alternatives and strategies is urgent. This research therefore has particular importance because it highlights the mismatch between the expectations and results of the dominant development strategies pursued in the region and explores the potential of alternative strategies like the inter-

island trade which draw on the human and physical resources of the region.

Hucksters (like Corinne) are small-scale, inter-island, Caribbean traders who operate in the so-called informal sector and trade and market goods, primarily agricultural produce, for domestic consumption. They are women whose lives have been shaped by the unique history of the Caribbean.²

Since the slavery era, these traders have served the domestic needs of the region. The reality for many Caribbean countries is that they produce (largely for export) what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce. Because of these distortions huckstering serves a vital economic function in meeting local needs. As Niala Maharaj bitingly notes:

Were it not for them, [hucksters], we would have been absolutely at the mercy of the import-export merchants who would have happily weaned us into a total dependency on Kelloggs and Kraft. It is not unrealistic to argue that some of us would have completely forgotten the taste of balata, and sapodilla and eddoes. And so, we would have been held hostage to the suppliers of foreign food. (Maharaj 1988, 11)

Presently the region's traders have established an intricate trading network amongst the countries in the region. See Map 1.

² "Caribbean" in the context of this thesis refers to the English-speaking Caribbean.

Map 1

GEOGRAPHICAL MOVEMENTS OF THE INTER-ISLAND TRADERS IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

Source: [illegible], p. 10.

Despite the dynamic nature of the trade and its significance to the economies of the region, there is limited information recorded about it. Hence understanding the scope and complexities of the trade is difficult. For example, because many hucksters declare their occupation as "housewife" or define themselves as part of the agricultural, self-employed or commerce sectors in labour force statistics, it is difficult to determine the precise numbers of people involved in the trade or how much income it generates in the Caribbean region. Similarly many hucksters trade irregularly or combine trading with other income-earning activities.

Recent studies by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) however, have produced statistics for some islands. For the islands relevant to this research, ECLAC estimates that at least 322 traders operated from St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 1987 (Lagro 1988, 10), though this figure appears to have dropped in the last few years. In Dominica though there are upwards of one thousand licenced traders the number of these who traded regularly in 1989 was 119 (Lagro & Plotkin 1990, 10). This figure represents a 46% decline from the previous year (Lagro 1990, 13).

While the majority of traders are female (approximately 80%), do not work in the formal sector, and are of rural origin (ECLAC 1988, 6), hucksters are becoming a much more

heterogenous group in terms of commodities traded, age and education. Traders may range in age anywhere from 17 to 70 and may trade anything from local dasheen and eddoes to imported consumer goods from Venezuela or Brazil (LeFranc 1988, 15). The various economic, social and demographic dimensions of the trade have changed over time in response to the changing social, political and economic climate of the region. Historical analysis of the trade, therefore offers insight into the evolution of Caribbean political economies.

The limited information on the trade, particularly in its early days early in this century, is largely due to the fact that hucksters have been regarded with little importance and respect throughout Caribbean history. Their activities have always been relegated to the "informal" sector and have been perceived as having marginal development potential for the region. In spite of this peripheralization, the trade has survived, though not always easily. Hucksters struggle on a daily basis in their dealings with farmers, customs officials, immigration officers, formal sector merchants and airline personnel. They often suffer serious losses due to poor packaging or post harvest handling, and without insurance or access to credit, the profit margins are squeezed. Not surprisingly stress and high blood pressure are commonly experienced amongst these women. Overall, problems for traders abound,

yet little effort is made by governments to ameliorate them.

Many hucksters however, are not content to support a system with their energies and time which does not support their efforts in return. Realizing they are women who share common interests and anxieties, and recognizing the vital and potentially powerful role they play in their economies, hucksters in Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica are seeking solutions to their problems through collective action and struggle. For many women in the informal sector, organization is the first step towards "visibility" and policy reform. The Dominican Hucksters' Association was founded in 1981 and the Traffickers Small Business Association of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 1983. Both represent grassroots struggles for social change.

It would appear over the last few years that the voices of these organizations are being heard. Recent recognition of the informal sector, by international institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations, has drawn attention to the informal sector and the women who participate within it. A sudden surge of interest has developed in the developmental potential of a previously unrecognized and marginal sector of the economy. The negative and positive implications this interest may have for hucksters are numerous.

Research Task

This research addresses the issue of inter-island trading in the region on three levels: the historical-international, the regional and the human. In doing so it asks three essential questions. First what historically has been the role of the trade of agricultural produce in the Caribbean region and how has this role been effected or shaped by the nature of the region's insertion into the world economy? Second, what developmental potential does this trade have for the region's economies? Last, on a human level, how have women, who predominate in the trade, coped with their many responsibilities as mothers, partners, and household heads and how, through their work, have they restructured gender relations in their lives and empowered themselves as women?

Essentially the research is concerned with process. Therefore while analyzing the experience and situation of hucksters in the present, it looks to the past to explain the forces that brought the present situation into being and searches for tendencies which point to how the future is being structured in the present. In other words, I am concerned to find out how gender relations, the gender division of labour and the nature of an informal trading activity have been mediated by other forces and structures in society.

Furthermore, in analyzing how the economic, political, and social processes we call development have modified or restructured, undermined or reinforced gender relations and/or the situation of huckstering, it is important to ask by whose motivation and in whose interest the changes have occurred. For example, has the recent surge in interest in the informal sectors of many Third World countries, including those in the Caribbean, been inspired by a genuine concern for the masses of women who procure a livelihood from this sector, or by the sudden realization of the economic and growth potential of a sector which until recently has been marginalized? Or, as Watts (1989) suggests, perhaps the informal sector is now being regarded as a "cheap development platform" for First World countries to support.

As feminist research, it is the task of this thesis to assess the degree to which changes in the situation of huckstering, whether facilitated by the state, the international economic climate, or the women themselves through organization, have improved the status of these women and their trade in their societies. Their efforts through organization and collective struggle provide the necessary forum for them to contextualize their lives and difficulties and seek solutions to common concerns, whether in a practical or strategic sense (Molyneux 1985). The aim here is to go beyond rearticulating the measures required to

improve these women's condition or to meet their practical needs and to speculate as to what extent actually or potentially their actions sow the seeds for the transformation of their societies and their empowerment as women.

In Chapter one I elaborate the theoretical framework. I begin with an assessment of the current body of literature available on huckstering and on Caribbean women in general, pointing to the dominant paradigm which informs most analyses and the gaps and insufficiencies evident within it. Given the task of the research, an alternative feminist political economy approach is introduced as a preferred framework for capturing the multidimensional nature of Caribbean hucksters' experience and for understanding their status in society. In Chapter two I develop the participatory research methodology used for this thesis.

In Chapters three and four I situate the trade within a historical and international context in order to understand how it has responded to the changes in the political economy of the region. These chapters provide a broad regional backdrop to the specific contemporary case study of traders from St. Vincent and Dominica discussed in chapters five and six.

I historicizes the phenomenon of the trade of agricultural produce in the English-speaking Caribbean in Chapter three. Specifically I examine how and why the trade

has evolved and survived historically as an economic mainstay in the region. I also discuss the changes in the gender division of labour through Caribbean history since European conquest and slavery to determine how and why women have come to predominate in huckstering in the contemporary period. The objective is to understand how social, economic, political and cultural structures have shaped and continue to shape the nature of the trade and the lives of the women who participate in it.

In Chapter four I focus on the current dimensions of the inter-island trade in the West Indies. Essentially I define the current socio-economic and political parameters in which traders operate. More specifically, I examine how the trade has shaped itself in response to the current economic crisis and the stringent policy measures adopted in the region to cope with this crisis.

Chapters five and six constitute a more focused case study of the traders of St. Vincent and Dominica. See Maps 2 and 3. They provide a more indepth analysis of the contemporary situation surrounding the trade of agricultural produce in the region. Much of the information is gathered from the experiences of traders from these two islands through field work conducted in St. Vincent, Dominica, Trinidad, and Guadeloupe between January and October of 1990.

In Chapter five I explore various dimensions of the

inter-island trade in the context of the contemporary political economies of St. Vincent and Dominica. More specifically I discuss the characteristics of the trading population, the type of goods traded, the problems incurred by traders and changes that the trade has experienced over the years. Lastly I focus on the role that traders' organizations have played in supporting these women's activities, meeting their needs, and ensuring their survival in years to come.

In Chapter six I focus on the current gender dimensions of the inter-island trade. Drawing on the information gathered from personal life histories of hucksters from St. Vincent and Dominica, I explore how these women cope as entrepreneurs, mothers, and heads of households and detail the challenges they face as women in Caribbean society. Furthermore, while acknowledging that women's participation predominates in the informal economies of most Third World countries, in this chapter I discuss why and how this trend exists in a Caribbean context. Lastly I articulate the women's own perceptions and understanding of their condition and status both as traders and as women in Caribbean society.

In Chapter seven I conclude the thesis by exploring what prospects these hucksters and their trade offer for development in the region. I develop the point that both historically and in recent times the trade has represented

an indigenous, creative and human response to crisis in the region and speculate as to the role it can and will be allowed to play in future Caribbean development strategies. Of particular interest are the traders' own visions for development in the region, how they perceive their role and contribution to their societies, and if they see themselves as agents of social change. The thesis ends with a brief reflection on some of the theoretical and methodological issues raised in chapters one and two.

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Critique and demystification of the dominant philosophy is an indispensable part of revolutionary praxis."

George Aseniero, 1985

Until the publication of Ester Boserup's pathbreaking book Women's Role in Economic Development in 1970, the androcentric biases of development theory, policy and planning went largely unrecognized. Prior to Boserup the dominant liberal belief was that as a society modernized gender asymmetries were reduced. Boserup raised concerns however that modernization was negatively impacting upon women by displacing them from their traditional productive functions and not integrating them into new ones thereby diminishing their income and status. In other words development was leaving women behind. It was not until the UN Decade for Women, 1975 -1985, that the issue of women's participation in the development process came to the forefront of the international agenda. During and since the Decade a proliferation of literature has emerged attempting to elucidate and deal constructively with the issues surrounding women and the development process. Cumulatively this body of literature has challenged the assumption that the development process affects men and women in the same manner, has given voice and credibility to the concerns of Third World women, and has added a previously absent gender

dimension to development perspectives. The literature however is not without factions and theoretical cleavages. The discussion in this chapter firstly attempts to outline the emergence of the dominant paradigm on women in development, pointing to its limitations and shortcomings, defining and analyzing its theoretical underpinnings, and assessing the degree to which it can address the research task at hand. Secondly, out of the criticisms raised of the dominant paradigm, an alternative feminist political economy perspective which synthesizes insights of the dominant paradigm with the theoretical richness of socialist feminism and the gender and development approach is introduced.

The Dominant Paradigm

Beginning with Boserup, the dominant paradigm on women and development (the WID -- women in development -- school) emerged as a feminist critique of the dominant liberal or modernization model of development. Boserup's research raised three fundamental points of departure for the study of women in development. First, she noted that cross-culturally there existed socially constructed sexual divisions of labour that were not static but changed over time. Second, she drew attention to the fact that economic development in the Third World has had a differential impact on men and women and that the impact on women often had been negative. Lastly, she pointed out that women are major economic contributors in their societies, yet their economic

contributions have not been reflected in statistics or development planning (Beneria & Roldan 1987, 3; Maguire 1984, 6-7). While there is general consensus in development circles as to the credibility of these findings, opinions part over Boserup's analysis of and prescriptions for these phenomena.

Boserup's gender sensitive research revealed conclusively that the modernization process has a detrimental impact on women. From the onset of colonialism, men rather than women benefitted from the introduction of property rights, technology, credit, education, and wage labour. Concurrently, processes associated with modernization such as urbanization, mobility, technological advance, and conversion to cash cropping, have cut off women from their traditional economic and social roles and thrust them into the modern sector where they lack the skills, property, capital or education to earn income in the formal sector. Such discrimination and marginalization have relegated women to the least productive and least paid activities such as factory assembly work or domestic labour (Jaquette 1982; Bandarage 1984; Staudt 1986). Hence, modernization, rather than liberating women and reducing gender inequalities, has effectively contributed to a decline in women's status relative to men's and increased female dependency. Boserup's observations were shared and documented by others (see Rogers 1979; Tinker and Bramsen

1976). The cumulative work of these researchers led to the formation of the WID school in the development industry and to the launching of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985). The thrust of the WID school is essentially liberal feminist, emphasizing that women should be granted equality of opportunity with men in all aspects of society, and that constraints which hinder women from such equal participation should be eliminated (Jagger 1983; Maguire 1984). Hence the liberal feminist solution to woman's marginalization is to prescribe the necessary legal and administrative changes which would ensure that women had equal access to work and to its economic rewards.

The thrust of the UN Decade for Women was to provide women with the tools and opportunities which would enable them to participate equally and share in the development process with men. Women were to be upgraded so they could contribute productively to the development system which previously ignored, by-passed and rendered them invisible (Maguire 1984, 22). Education was necessary to "capitalize" women, to overcome sexism, and to free women from the ignorance that is a hindrance to progress (Boserup & Liljencranz 1975, 28). Legalistic reform was necessary to change discriminatory hiring practices and access to education. Economic reform was necessary to prevent monopsonistic hiring practices and the underpayment of legitimate income shares and income generating projects were

necessary to integrate poor housewives into their economies. Integration policies and slogans were adopted worldwide by the development industry. According to Maguire:

The plan then was to "treat" women. Agencies developed special women's projects as well as women's components of larger projects. Programs targeted education, nutrition, family planning, income generation, training and employment. (1984, 22)

The hopeful intentions of the Decade's projects however, were not reflected in their actual outcomes. In the Caribbean, rather than emancipating women, WID strategies tended to perpetuate their marginalization. As Antrobus observes:

Ironically it was the implementation of many of the strategies of the Plans and Programmes of Action in this region which revealed their limitation in terms of actual or meaningful change in the situation of women. For example, the new laws which remained unused; the National Machinery which only served to maintain women's marginality; the educational and training programmes which reinforced sex-stereotypes and gender-roles. (1985, 1)

Income generating projects for women often emphasize those traditional areas of female employment such as domestic service or handicrafts which continue to be areas of low income and low status and which are peripheral to development concerns (Gill 1984, 4). Such projects, because they focus on the skills and attributes women already have, do not act as viable means for women securing employment when the project is over. Hence there is no integration between the project and the wider economy, nor between women and the wider economy. Consequently any confidence the

project may generate for the women involved is shortlived since most projects fail to change women's situation. While such projects tend to be favoured and funded by international agencies, because they lack these vital backward and forward linkages with the economy, they also lack "sustainable" development potential. Consequently, many are often terminated without women's income, skills, or opportunities for further employment enhanced. As Sen and Grown conclude:

Overall the Decade's projects yielded mixed results. Many did little to change the distribution of household labour or increase women's access to resources. A number of them increased children's labour (especially that of daughters) who took on a share of the additional workload created by their mother's participation in the project. Women's incomes from the project tended most often to stay the same or to increase slightly. In a few instances, women actually incurred debts. (1987, 44)

The results of the projects were in fact contrary to their intentions. Women were victims of further marginalization and isolation from the development process. In retrospect, it seems that the WID package was accepted without analyzing whether and to what degree women were already integrated into the existing socio-economic structure.

Such contradictory outcomes led to a growing dissatisfaction with WID policies and to a questioning of the basic assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of the WID approach. While the WID school critiques the modernization school for its insensitivity to gender issues,

it does not critique the basic epistemological assumptions of modernization theory itself and the system it supports. Modernization theory or developmentalism is rooted in both eurocentric and androcentric biases. People and societies are placed on a continuum where the values and institutions embodied in the "developed" Western male world are held as the ideal. Consequently Third World peoples and Third World women have aspired to achieve and obtain the social, economic, political and material conditions of the Western and male worlds. Liberal feminism's goal is women's equal participation in this existing system. It assumes that women must be included in or added to the development process rather than that the development process must be altered to be more accountable to women's reality. Whether this homogenization of peoples and cultures is possible or desirable is never questioned. There is little attempt to redefine power or the concept of development or to understand the nature of the existing system of which the logic itself may be oppressive to Third World women. Both the WID and modernization schools equate development with a growth-oriented process wherein capitalist institutions are taken as the norm. There is no critique of the structures of oppression which created sexist ideologies and inegalitarian laws and practices. Hence the desirability of the existing economic structures and the extent to which they have shaped women's position in society is never

questioned. Rather it is assumed and accepted that the inherently hierarchical structures of the capitalist system are potentially emancipatory for all -- including women.

Popular disseminators of the WID perspective are national government agencies or departments such as The United States Agency for International Development and The Canadian International Development Agency; international development institutions such as the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank. Liberal feminism has proved an acceptable basis for reform for these agencies precisely because it does not challenge underlying assumptions regarding structural causes of gender relations (Stamp 1989, 15). Instead the literature embraces the rhetoric and practices of the WID approach without questioning its underlying assumptions as to the causes of women's continued subordination and more generally to what constitutes development. (Clarke 1985, 51). Consequently it lacks explanatory potential for many of the problems Third World women face not only as economic agents but also as women and hence fails to capture fully the reality of their lives.

Liberal feminist studies however need not be dismissed as irrelevant or inappropriate for informing us about the reality confronting Third World women. Just as a dissatisfaction with the liberal paradigm has generated alternative frameworks for analysis, so too has it generated

more critical thinking from within the liberal school. While the weakness of liberal feminism has been its failure to question and therefore to explain historically and structurally how and why gender asymmetries exist, its strength has been in its rich empirical research into gender asymmetries and their manifestations in women's lives. As Stamp notes, many liberal studies are committed to "description from the inside" (1989, 20). Hence they are sensitive to the local voice in terms of relating the actions and words of the women involved and describing the socio-cultural context in which they act. Relevant examples amongst the literature on Caribbean women include The Institute for Social and Economic Research studies on women and the family, women and work, and women and culture (Massiah 1986). More recently, The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) has released numerous studies on the activities of Caribbean hucksters, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean. These studies provide a rich and detailed insight into the lives of a marginalized group of women. Liberal feminist studies have drawn attention to issues such as women's unpaid family labour, the lack of child care, and the predominance of female headed household (Jaquette 1982, 271).

While these studies may not be overtly critical themselves, their provocative findings often inspire or warrant further analytical inquiry. In detailing the

various forms of social, political and economic oppression that these women must constantly face and challenge these studies underscore the necessity to question the forces that have been instrumental in shaping their reality critically. Furthermore, in the richness of their empirical detail these studies provide the basis for challenging Western epistemological assumptions regarding the universality of many features of economics, politics, and gender relations. The material presented in the UNECLAC studies suggests that often taken-for-granted Western concepts such as the family, the household, the economy, or the role of women, take on a distinctly different meaning in Caribbean society. It is precisely this sensitivity to the local or indigenous reality that gives these liberal studies special value. Where they fall short, however, is in their reluctance to cross the threshold from description to explanation, from recognizing gender asymmetries to explaining why they exist and what they mean. For example, much of the literature on the inter-island trade, such as those studies by UNECLAC, tends to be descriptive and lacking analysis. Huckstering has not been contextualized within wider socioeconomic and historical processes and the dynamics of other spheres which influence huckstering such as the household, the political and economic environment often go unaddressed. While cumulatively the literature on huckstering does address these issues, individual studies only tend to present

fragments of a much larger picture.

Furthermore, while it has been recognized in the literature that women predominate in huckstering, there has been little or no exploration of what this predominance means. Such an exploration would consider whether there is a connection between the fact that huckstering is an unrecognized activity and the fact that it is poor, Afro-Caribbean women who engage in it. Would huckstering be an entirely different activity if it were performed by white, middle-class men? Furthermore, does the uniqueness and dynamism of huckstering stem from inherent characteristics of the trade itself or from the women who engage in it? Current statistical and descriptive literature does not provide a sufficiently indepth view of women's lives or a broad enough picture of the social, economic and political context in which they act to address these questions adequately.

A further limitation of the literature, is its focus on a dominance/submission dichotomy and other dualisms when dealing with gender relations. It is often assumed that women are universally oppressed or hold a lower position in society than men. This assumption however and the use of the power terminology of Western society has distorted our understanding of gender relations (Stamp 1989, 24). It is

misleading to talk of a single high or low position for women. Power, decision-making and authority are multifaceted phenomena. Terms like "position" are essentialist and exclude a dynamic view of change. Their use inhibits an exploration of under what conditions women in particular societies, such as the Caribbean, have held relative power and autonomy and what, if any, factors are responsible for undermining or strengthening this condition.

Other dualisms such as the nature/culture and private/public dichotomies, also place biased, eurocentric parameters around our understanding of gender relations. In Third World societies such as the Caribbean these dualisms, either in the past or the present, may have been absent. The danger in universalizing from Western experience is that it prevents us from uncovering and understanding these historical and cultural differences.

A third limitation of much of the literature arises from the tendency to categorize and view women according to their roles as mothers, or producers or hucksters. While women do indeed juggle many roles in their lifetime, these roles are ascribed and do not exist in a vacuum. Rather they evolve and change over time according to particular social, economic, cultural and political circumstances. Such an emphasis on roles tends to convey a static and ahistorical view of gender relations. It gives one little

sense of the interaction between women and men and how a woman's role as mother is related to a man's role as breadwinner, or how in Caribbean society a woman's role as huckster is related to the non-existence of the role of male breadwinner. Furthermore, a focus on women's roles as mothers, or wives, or caregivers often implies that women are more central to gender relations than men. According to Stamp (1989):

There is a particular danger in the implication that women are more central to gender relations than men. Because they are the chief occupants of what is seen as the sphere of "the traditional," the separation of women from the core of society constructs them as an anomaly for development, less likely than men to become modern participants in politics or the economy. Women become "the problem." (24)

While an analysis of the various and numerous roles a woman may juggle in her life eludes a sense of dynamism, it tends to vagueness or essentialism on the question of where roles come from, how they change and where the norms and values supporting role conformity are derived and how and why they change (Young 1988, 4).

Lastly, much of the literature on women in the development process has a tendency to view women as passive recipients of change and victims of forces they do not generate or control. No account is taken of women's own resistance and struggles that, while clearly subject to significant constraints due to their subordination in society, derive from a strategy of their own. Little emphasis is placed on the role women have taken or can take

in restructuring gender relations. This is largely due to liberalism's acceptance of the status quo and its emphasis on incorporating women into this system rather than radically altering the system itself. The conventional way of analyzing women's relationship to society as "victim" and "oppressor" fails to give voice and meaning to women's potential and struggle to effect change.

Overall, the dominant paradigm on women and development and the literature it has inspired have conveyed a static and ahistorical sense of Third World women's reality. By focusing on women in their present condition and targeting them as "the problem" such analyses fail to capture the dynamics of gender relations as mediated by social, economic, political and cultural structures and by human agents such as women themselves who struggle to resist and/or reshape these structures.

Feminist Political Economy and
the Study of Caribbean Hucksters

In order to overcome the limitations and biases of the dominant paradigm, one requires a theoretical framework which:

- historicizes gender relations to understand how the sex-gender system in a society interacts with relations of production on an international, regional, national and human scale;
- identifies and rectifies not only androcentric biases which have distorted an understanding of Third World gender relations but also eurocentric biases;
- carries the discourse on women and development beyond an analysis of how women are integrated into or impacted by the development process to a questioning of the ideology and philosophy behind the concept of development itself; and
- utilizes a level of analysis which allows an exploration of these issues.

Feminist political economy is a pluralistic framework which provides such an analysis. Such an approach draws heavily on the Gender and Development (GAD) holistic perspective. As Young (1988) illustrates:

It looks at the totality of social organization, economic and political life, in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society. While it assumes that gender will be an important aspect of social organisation, it does not assume it will be the only one nor the most powerful, nor that gender

relations will be the principal determinant of a woman's situation. As a result it looks at the culturally specific forms of social inequality and divisions, and tries to see how gender is related to or interlocked with a wide variety of forms of social hierarchy. This implies that the position of a given society within the wider international system must itself be part of the analysis. (2)

In terms of this research this means inserting gender relations into Caribbean political economy to understand how gender relations have changed over time in response to changes in the economy. Slavery, for example, had a profound and long lasting effect on women's activities, household structure, and the evolution of gender relations in the region. Such an approach, by rescuing women's activities throughout Caribbean history from obscurity, underscores the importance of traditionally perceived non-economic or marginalized spheres like the household and the informal sector in the overall political economy of the region. It reveals not only how women have been affected by global or regional changes but also how they have acted as agents of change and process politically, economically, and socially throughout Caribbean history. In the current period Caribbean women are among those most burdened by severe structural adjustment measures implemented throughout the region. At the same time however, their survival strategies such as inter-island trading hold the possibility of transformational change for the region.

The substance of feminist political economy also draws from the indepth empirical analyses found in many liberal

studies which contribute a vital local perspective on human reality. Such analyses make it possible to overcome some of the western biases and assumptions inherent in much feminist and non-feminist scholarship (Stamp 1989, 74). Much of our knowledge about Third World people, their experience, and their gender relations has been developed within the parameters of eurocentric and androcentric discourse or modes of knowledge. Our tendency to universalize Western concepts and categories such as the family, politics, the economy, and more broadly the concept of development, and to record history according to these biases, has rendered the differences evident in Third World societies invisible. Thus, the concrete realities as constructed and lived by Third World people disappear from our view or are misconstrued by our analysis (Stamp 1989, 20). The so-called informal sector has played a vital and essential role in Caribbean development, yet its importance has been marginalized in the broad development picture. Similarly, the evaluation of West Indian household structure against eurocentric models has depicted the West Indian family as a deviant type or aberration from the norm (Smith 1973, Craton 1978).

Feminist political economy is committed to rescuing Third World realities from Western intellectual hegemony by uncovering the ways in which Western knowledge has silenced local knowledges of gender relations and by rectifying those

silences. Unlike "developmentalist" schools it implores us to question the epistemological foundations of concepts we loosely use such as "development." Hence feminist political economy is concerned with socially responsible feminist theory which attempts to make political economy more accountable to the realities of Third World people and gender relations, past and present.

Feminist political economists reveal that not only women's reality, but that lived and experienced by Third World women and men has been marginalized from the dominant discourse on development. Feminist political economy research therefore, by reinserting this knowledge into the discourse, can contribute to the development of alternative theories and epistemologies which are truly human-centred.

There is a growing dissatisfaction in the Third World, including the Caribbean, with the dominant development models employed. Third World scholars in particular are questioning the epistemological foundations of these models and their appropriateness for Third World countries. As Aseniero (1985) observes:

underneath the alleged differences between contending theories, lies in fact an old and enduring, powerful and all-pervasive philosophy, which is the domain where all these theories are firmly planted, from whence they draw their nourishment, and which circumscribes the field of their investigations. It is in this philosophy that we find the fundamental principles and concepts that the various development theories hold in common and which they take for granted. And it is in terms of this philosophy that we can assess in fact how deep and thorough contemporary development debate really is, and to what extent self-proclaimed

'alternative' development models really are different at all. (53)

This "developmentalist" philosophy has been critiqued by Third World scholars: as eurocentric, in its view that the European/Western experience of development can be universalized to non-Western parts of the world (Addo 1985; Amin 1989), androcentric in its marginalization and devalourization of women's contributions (Stamp 1989, Antrobus 1989); and anthropocentric in its view that a superior human destiny lies in the domination and control of nature, for which technology becomes a primordial weapon (Max-Neef 1982, 40). Embedded in developmentalist philosophy are three fundamental goals -- modernization, economic growth and nation-state building (Aseniero 1985) and the belief that perpetual growth and progress are not only possible but desirable and attainable by all countries, including those in the Third World. This epistemology has been internalized by those in both the First and Third Worlds. The debate in the development discourse therefore has focused principally on how Third World countries can achieve these goals. Using either a liberal or Marxist model, the path is essentially a linear one from traditional to modern (Stamp 1989), with traditional embodying the conditions in Third World countries and modern associated with the social, economic, political and cultural conditions evident in the so-called industrialized countries. Development studies have been concerned with how to tread

this path. Chapter three elaborates how this developmental thrust has unfolded historically in the Caribbean.

For most Third World countries this model of development has proven to be unsuccessful in meeting the needs of large percentages of their populations. The development of human beings has not been the fundamental goal of our developmentalist models. At best it has been a marginal appendage, whereby policies now address how the human or environmental effects of industrialization or growth or structural adjustment can be tempered or softened. Yet, for lack of "politically acceptable" development alternatives, the model continues to be pursued. If a development alternative is to be found, it will be generated from those whose interests, values, and world view are marginalized and not articulated in the dominant eurocentric and androcentric model of development. Missing from the discourse are theories which originate from alternative epistemologies and realities evident in the Third World.

Feminist political economy provides a framework for drawing on Third World women's reality as a foundation for alternative development strategies. The Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) network is currently engaged in feminist political economy research into the human effects of the current crisis. Such research by focussing on the human effects of and response to macroeconomic strategies like structural adjustment,

underscores the necessity of examining the relationship between the international political economy and the intra-household. This information then can be inserted into the discourse on development thereby encouraging and supporting the development of alternative theories and epistemologies which are truly human-centred.

As Third World women have experienced, the capitalist system constantly generates exploitation and oppression. At the same time however, it also engenders oppositional force and resistance. The feminist movement particularly in the Third World, represents this type of anti-systemic movement which conceptualizes people and not the nation-state as the unit of development and reconceptualizes development not as "progress" but as social transformation. Hence it looks for creative indigenous forms of social, cultural and economic survival and sustainability upon which to develop alternative development strategies.

Movements such as this are often generated out of points of conflict and contradiction in the present system. Huckstering is a classic example of this form of resistance. As a growing activity it represents an economic and political response by many Caribbean women to the failure of the present system to meet their developmental needs.

The critical state of the capitalist world system at the present shows the obsolescence of traditional development policies, and of problem-solving strategies

which remain bound within the parameters of the current system. The crisis reveals the system's urgent need for transformational change. As a mode of analysis feminist political economy provides the tools for exploring whether the seeds for this transformation can be found in the creative and indigenous survival strategies of Third World women such as hucksters.

In undertaking such research the level of analysis used is an important issue. As mentioned earlier, a critique of liberal feminist studies is that they fail to question and explain historically and structurally how and why gender asymmetries exist. While liberal studies focus on the particular circumstances facing a group of women such as Caribbean inter-island traders, feminist political economy studies are concerned with the relation between particular phenomena and broader structural phenomena. The objective is to cross the threshold from describing these traders' reality to explaining it. This study therefore analyzes how the interaction of capitalism and the sex-gender system in the Caribbean has affected the reality experienced by these women traders historically. Using this method of analysis the study presents the phenomenon of female trading not as a unique or isolated Caribbean experience but as an example of how poor women are integrated into a global capitalist system and how in turn they survive within it. Only by understanding how these women and their trade fit into the

broader scheme of international and regional political economy can one understand how and why the trade has evolved since the slavery era and what its prospects are for the future.

A feminist political economy framework allows an issue such as the inter-island trade to be approached from several integrated levels of analysis. Like more traditional studies in political economy feminist political economists are concerned with both systemic and nation-state analyses. In terms of this research this means examining how the inter-island trade has been shaped by the global economy and how the trade impacts developmentally on nation-states such as St. Vincent and Dominica. Unlike most studies in political economy however, feminist political economy also takes a human-centred level of analysis examining how human reality impacts and is affected by other socio-economic forces. Such a level of analysis humanizes political economy by enabling a "view from the inside" and providing a voice for human concerns. This research goes beyond an economistic understanding of the trade and towards an intimate understanding of the women who are its essence.

Because studies in feminist political economy incorporate several levels of analysis they represent an integrated approach to the social sciences. In other words politics is not seen as separate from economics, or anthropology, or history, or women's studies.

Correspondingly, in this research the inter-island trade is not approached as solely a gender issue or an economic issue, but from an interdisciplinary, holistic perspective that does not distort or fragment the reality experienced by these women.

Similarly, feminist political economy contends that gender is constructed simultaneously with a multiplicity of relations such as race, class and ethnicity. In a Caribbean context, women's experience, and oppression, varies according to their race and class. Racism, "classism" and sexism however, are not autonomous forms of oppression which manifest themselves in isolation of the other forms. Though they may be analytically distinguishable at a theoretical level, in practice they cannot be easily disentangled. This is particularly true for hucksters whose position in society is derived from an interplay of factors. This research therefore explores the dialectic between these different forms of oppression.

Amongst the literature on the Caribbean there are some excellent works which, like feminist political economy, seek to render political economy accountable to Third World reality and which challenge received Western biases inherent in many analyses. Notably amongst these works are those by Caribbean political economists in the "The New World Group" -- Thomas 1988; Beckford 1972, 1989; Girvan 1984; and Best 1968. Since the sixties these studies have made a

significant contribution in terms of engendering a Caribbean perspective on international relations and fostering an understanding of the Caribbean's insertion politically and economically into the world system. In particular, these studies have challenged the policy prescriptions of the Lewis model of industrialization by invitation and illustrated how the plantation and mineral extractive economies have perpetuated structures of inequality and reinforced modes of dependency in the region (Best 1968; Girvan and Jefferson 1974).

These political economists have attempted to chart an alternative path for Caribbean development by recommending policies such as the "nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy," more state intervention in the running of the economy, and the restructuring of economies to better meet the needs of marginalized groups. Examples of these policy prescriptions in practice are the experiments with democratic socialism in Jamaica from 1972-1980, socialism in Grenada from 1979-1983, and cooperative socialism in Guyana under the Burnham regime (Thomas 1988, 209-265). While this literature and these experiments are largely inspired by socialist and dependency thinking, they represent an attempt to forge an alternative and more indigenous development path for the region.

Feminist political economy takes this valuable research one step further by inserting a gender element into such

analyses. Such studies are relatively novel to West Indian literature. The works by Reddock (1985, 1986, 1988) on women's labour in historical perspective perhaps most epitomize feminist political economy. Her literature on women under slavery and indentureship has added a new and needed dimension to the history of the region.

Reddock's work not only challenges and redefines traditional conceptions of the family, women's work and the economy but also has linked these concepts to the changing needs of international capital. Her analyses explore the relationship between numerous forms of oppression (racial, class, and gender) and the international capitalist order to understand how the former have been mediated or manipulated by the latter.

Other important research are those studies undertaken by The Women and Development Unit, Barbados, (WAND), notably by Peggy Antrobus, and a recent publication, In the Shadows of the Sun: Caribbean Development Alternatives and U.S. Policy, which has significant feminist contributors, including Antrobus. These studies which focus primarily on current issues of concern in the region, including debt, and structural adjustment, draw important links between these issues and the effects they have on the poor, particularly women. All these studies rescue women's history and reality and insert it into Caribbean political economy thus enriching the discipline as a whole. The objective of this

research is to contribute to this emerging body of literature. It is important however, first to examine critically some of the concepts often used to understand women's reality.

Epistemological Challenges for Feminist Political Economy

In order to rescue Third World reality and gender relations from eurocentric and androcentric biases and reconceptualize political economy in accordance with this reality, there are several epistemological challenges that a feminist political economist must face. In particular it is necessary to question, deconstruct and often redefine many of the analytical concepts which traditionally have been used to understand and explain Third World reality and gender relations. In the case of this research there are a number of concepts which bear intimately on an understanding of the experiences of these traders. Yet because their foundations are embedded in Western androcentric discourse, when transposed to a Caribbean context they distort rather than elucidate one's understanding of the reality.

Dichotomization

Western androcentric epistemology, particularly in the capitalist era, has had the tendency to compartmentalize or dichotomize all aspects of human existence. From Aristotle's separation of master from slave through to the Cartesian mind/body split, our discourse has dichotomized culture from nature, reason from emotion, public from

private, man from woman and in terms of the economy, formal from informal. Interestingly, and somewhat disturbingly, for feminists has been the tendency within our epistemology to valorize authority, the mind, rationality, the public sphere, and the formal economy, and in turn associate all these with men. This compartmentalization is similarly true in the social sciences where disciplines such as politics or economics are studied independently of each other. Feminist political economy as an integrated social science breaks down these artificial dichotomies not only by taking an interdisciplinary approach to research but by questioning and challenging the various dichotomies embedded in our discourse.

a) the formal/informal dichotomy

Our discourse tends to divide the economy into formal and informal sectors. There is an ongoing debate as to the suitability of this dualistic approach to the economy, the battle essentially pivoting on how one defines key terms such as capitalism, employment, and mode of production (see Moser 1978; Bienefeld 1981; Bromley and Gerry 1979; Hart 1973; Bairoch 1973). While it is not the intention of this research to enter this debate, suffice it to say that the dominant use of the term "informal" has been based on a dichotomization not only of the economy but correspondingly to modes of production -- capitalist and peasant; to people -- educated and uneducated, skilled and unskilled, male and

female; to labour --wage and self-employment; and to income -- high profit and low profit (Moser 1978).

The inter-island trade is an activity which is very difficult to slot categorically into the informal sector. At different periods in the region's history it has attracted skilled and educated individuals. At times it has also been dominated by men. In recent history traders are known to have reaped windfall profits. Hence dealing with the trade within defined parameters not only masks the nuances of the activity but also conveys a static impression of the informal sector in general.

As Beneria and Roldan suggest however, the conceptualization of the formal/informal division is meaningful for the purpose of emphasizing the underground or unregulated nature of many activities. In the Caribbean context I also find it useful in distinguishing between activities such as huckstering which are rooted in indigenous or local resources, and serve local markets, and those activities, routinely espoused by the dominant political and class interests, which are externally oriented and propelled. The connection and the links of mutual dependency between the two sectors, however, need to be stressed (Beneria & Roldan 1987, 71).

Because feminist political economy is interested in challenging and questioning dichotomizations this research does not begin with the assumption that Caribbean

huckstering is an informal sector activity. Hence it is not constrained to analyze the activity according to specific criteria. Rather, the research objective is to trace the evolution of huckstering as a particular survival strategy that has been employed by Caribbean peoples, particularly women, since the days of slavery.

Such an historical approach reveals the trade as a vital component of an organic economy. For example, had provision grounds and the internal marketing system not been established on the islands by the plantocracy, the system of slavery may not have survived in the Caribbean. The slaves' activities in growing and marketing their own food in fact helped to maintain the slave-based economy.

An historical approach also reveals the informal/formal dichotomy as a static conceptualization confined to a particular period and circumstance. Our conception of the informal sector tends to reflect the post WWII phenomenon of Third World urbanization, ghettoization and the attendant surge of street vending, hustling and peddling. An analysis of huckstering reveals that such "informal" activities are not necessarily outcomes of increasing urban poverty in the twentieth century but have arisen in response to the changing political economy of the region over centuries. Historically huckstering responded to the need for local agricultural produce which was in short supply in the colonies. More recently with the high cost of imported

goods in many countries and the shortages of many staple items and spare parts it is responding to consumer demand for foreign goods.

Huckstering has often been marginalized from historical accounts of West Indian political economy largely because it has been considered a peasant-type informal activity. The reinsertion of huckstering into the historical political economy of the West Indies reveals both the integral and integrated role this activity has played in the development of the region and the porous and arbitrary nature of the boundary between the formal and informal sectors.

b) the public/private dichotomy

A fundamental western assumption concerning gender relations is that men and women's activities predominate in different social domains -- men in the public, productive sphere and women in the private, reproductive one. This division however, is a powerful component of sexist ideology and policy. This classification and separation of women's activities from men's has led many to argue that the solution to women's disadvantaged status in society is either a more active role in the "public" sphere or a better recognition of the potential contribution of the "private" sphere (Stamp 1989, 113). Many socialist feminist critiques arose in response to this assessment, arguing that this dichotomization distorts our understanding of women's lives by artificially compartmentalizing their activities into

particular roles and spheres (Young 1987; Heyser 1981; Beneria and Sen 1981). These critiques, along with this research, raise the question of whether a private/public dichotomy is an accurate conceptualization of present and/or past life in Third World societies such as the Caribbean.

While there exists a sexual division of labour in the Caribbean as well as an ideological bifurcation between public and private, the boundaries in Caribbean society are much more porous than in western society. This is largely due to the fact that this dichotomy was unfamiliar to the African slave population in the 19th century. In the rural areas for example a distinct sexual division of labour was not evident amongst the slave population, particularly in field labour, because it was in the interests of the planter class to have both men and women working full time in the fields. Women slaves were also discouraged from having children because for slaveowners it was cheaper to import additional slaves from Africa than to lose women's labour power on the fields while childbearing and rearing. (Reddock 1988; Ford-Smith 1986). Hence, for the slave population, the notion of a "private domestic sphere" for women came to be associated with white privilege and class. As will be elaborated later however, as economic conditions changed and slavery was abolished, the value system of the colonialists and the image of the middle class housewife was projected through all levels of society. The majority of women in

Caribbean society however, never "enjoyed" the economic privilege of being a privatized housewife and to this day housewives are the exception and not norm in Caribbean society. In fact, in spite of this image being upheld as the correct state to which all women should aspire, Caribbean women have often lived and aspired to be something radically different from this image.

The role Caribbean women played in resistance movements throughout history, against slavery, and against control of their bodies evidences their lack of conformity to an imposed image of womanhood (Ford-Smith 1986). Hence, as much as the public/private dichotomy became an ideal, it never became a widespread reality in Caribbean society. What the history of gender relations in the Caribbean reveals, particularly amongst the African population, is that the sexual division of labour and dichotomizations such as that between the private and public sphere are social constructions that have been manipulated throughout Caribbean history to structure gender relations to serve various dominant interests. These insights raise important questions for this research. Firstly to what extent have these historical variations in the sexual division of labour affected gender relations in the present? Secondly, how has the dominant ideology concerning womanhood obscured Caribbean women's history by undermining their historical

role as leaders, resistors, and contributors to social change?

The Family and the Domestic Realm

The notion of a public/private dichotomy bears intimately on the issue surrounding the conceptualization of the family and the household. Given the primacy of the public over the private realm in much of the developmentalist literature, little attention is given to the dynamics of the household and the family. Consequently, policies are developed based on generalized assumptions about the household. Firstly, it is assumed that the household is an undifferentiated unit, usually a nuclear family, within which there is a clear sexual division of labour where the man as the "breadwinner" is primarily involved in productive work outside the home, while the woman as "housewife" assumes responsibility for the reproductive and domestic work (Moser 1987, 13). Implicit also is the assumption that within the household income and/or salaries all go into a common fund and that decision making power vis a vis the household is shared by both men and women (Beneria & Roldan 1987, 111-12; Moser 1987, 13). These assumptions however, are highly divorced from the reality in many Third World countries. And when superimposed on societies such as the Caribbean, they preclude an accurate conceptualization of gender relations in this cultural context.

In the Caribbean, the phenomena of matrifocality has been overgeneralized and hence has obfuscated an accurate understanding of household structures. The term which pervades the literature on the West Indian family often has been used in a static and ahistorical manner and has perpetuated the stereotypes of the dominant female household head and its corollary, the marginal and irresponsible male. While many households in the Caribbean are indeed female-headed, there is a great deal of variance in the meaning of the term matrifocal. For example, it may imply that women in society have a generally "good" or "respectable" status. Or it could suggest that they have control over income and other financial resources of the household. In another context it could refer to a situation in which women are primary earners in a household. It could also be applied to societies where male absenteeism has created a predominance of female-headed households (Mohammed 1988, 171-2; Gonzalez 1970).

A clearer conceptualization of the Caribbean household therefore requires a rigorous, historically grounded understanding of gender relations, as desired by a feminist political economy approach. As a starting point it is important to understand how Caribbean household organization and the values West Indian people attribute to it have been shaped by particular, historical, economic and social forces. Several factors that will be developed and

concretized in chapters to follow are worth noting from the outset. Firstly, explanations of the predominance of women as heads of household can be found historically in the slavery and post-emancipation period. For the full time labouring African woman and the economically deprived African man, who could not support a "non-earning housewife", the European conjugal union was not a viable option (Reddock 1988). Consequently, women came to constitute the focal point of the reproductive process, not only in the tasks associated with the rearing of children and family maintenance, but also because they bore the burden of being the family head, without stable help from male companions.

Secondly, harsh economic conditions in the Caribbean have given the Caribbean family a unique spatial dimension. Migration by family members to other Caribbean islands, North America and Britain for employment, and the consequent remittance of economic resources across national boundaries, has given the Caribbean family its transnational nature. Lastly, the extent to which the domestic ideology of the west has influenced attitudes towards the family and affected household structure in the Caribbean warrants further exploration. Hence, from a feminist political economy perspective, an accurate conceptualization of family and household relations in Caribbean society requires both a historical understanding of how and why household relations

developed as they did and a demystification of dominant notions of the household and the family that would obscure this understanding.

The Economic as the Socially Determining Level of Society

In many developmental circles little distinction, if any, is made between the concepts of "development" and "economic development". Both liberal and Marxist theories assume the primacy of economic motivation in human life. Similarly much of the WID literature generated from these two schools has focused either on developing women into better economic agents, or recognizing the economic contributions they make. Along these lines the work by socialist feminists such as Lourdes Beneria has challenged the narrow androcentric definitions of concepts such as "work", "labour force", and "production" asserting that women's unpaid work in subsistence and household production is economically essential for the functioning of the economic system as a whole (Beneria 1982). Consequently, considerable attention has been given to economic work women do on the margins of the "formal economy", like huckstering for example, and towards ways of facilitating their activities in these areas.

As activities such as huckstering are coming to be regarded as economically productive and having "developmental" potential, more attention is focused on women as economic beings and less as political or social

beings. In the case of huckstering this gives more recognition to women as traders than to traders as women. Little recognition or exploration is given to the developmental importance of women's nurturing, caring and socially reproductive activities. The concern therefore has been with their practical needs as traders (Lagro 1988; ECLAC 1988; Clarendon 1986) and not their strategic interests as women.

Similarly women's oppression has been characterized in economic terms. Women are perceived as being marginalized from economic activity by liberals and as being exploited and unrecognized for their labour in production and reproduction by Marxists. There is a danger however in reducing women's oppression and the complexities of their activities to simple economic dimensions. Women's oppression is not always economically based just as their decisions and actions are not always economically motivated. While women such as hucksters spend a great deal of time involved in the activities associated with production and reproduction, this should not minimize the importance of their political, social or ideological interests which may or may not be integrally connected to their economic activity. Similarly, the oppression experienced by male traders may be significantly different than that experienced by female traders suggesting that women's oppression as hucksters cannot be understood without understanding the

nature of the sex-gender system in Caribbean society and how it interacts with a particular mode of production. It is the task, therefore, of feminist political economists to avoid this economism by understanding the multiplicity of interests and obstacles that both challenge and motivate women's actions. Worth understanding furthermore, is why for some women, particular interests may be more primary than others or why certain interests may conflict with others, and how this prioritizing relates to women's social and economic position.

The point is that development is not solely an economic issue. By focusing on women as traders, the economic is isolated at the expense of the other interests that comprise the totality of these women's lives. While feminist political economy is interested in economic development it is equally interested in social development, cultural development, political development and development for and by women. It is the task of this research therefore to understand the importance of each of these to Caribbean hucksters.

Women's Power, Struggle and Strategic Survival

A salient feature of liberal feminism is its observation that women generally have not had equal opportunity and access as men have to participate in the so-called spheres of influence, power, and authority in society. This realization however has fostered the belief

that women consequently occupy a subordinate and less powerful position in society relative to men. While this assumption has validity its danger lies in the tendency to summarize women's status as one of subordination and powerlessness. Power however is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is conventionally recognized as the exercise of control or dominance. This dominant conceptualization of power has tended to be attached to individuals or groups in particular "public" spheres of influence, such as the state, the economy and politics, spheres where women's participation has tended to be marginalized. Consequently, women are assumed to lack power rather than possess it.

Feminist political economy is committed to rescuing women's history from this veil of misconception. It recognizes that the power dynamic of gender relations is not static and has evolved and changed through history. As both Ford-Smith and Reddock document, historically, Caribbean women's power permeated all spheres of life, notably in their struggle for emancipation from slavery. This is well evidenced in the story of Nanny, the Maroon warrior leader, who apparently bounced bullets off her bottom as she led the great trek of the Maroons across Jamaica in eighteenth century (Ford-Smith 1986). As Ford-Smith (1986) writes: "Studies of Maroon society have shown that Nanny was not just an exceptional woman or a freak. Her leadership was not merely one instance of a woman exercising power, but

grew out of a tradition of female leadership in Akan society (153)." Then, like now, female power derived not from formal institutions or legitimization but from loci of power such as small female-based groups in society, the household, and kin groups.

Women's experience with power, however, cannot be captured within the dominant androcentric discourse on power. Consequently women's power relation to men has been generalized as subordinate. While women may experience feelings of subordination and powerlessness in some spheres of their lives, particularly those which are male-dominated, they are rich without power, authority and autonomy in other spheres (Schlegel 1977). Hucksters for example exercise a great deal of power, authority and autonomy both in their profession and at the level of the household and community.

In the household, the issues of power and authority bear intimately on the issue of matrifocality. For example, a woman's income earning power in a household may not necessarily parallel her level of authority or respect in that household. Her non-earning male partner could in fact be the figurehead of authority. To understand how men and women divide and share power and authority in the social, economic, sexual and psychological spheres of the household one must understand the gender dynamics of individual situations.

In the huckstering community, women, particularly long-time traders, hold positions of status and respect (Durant-Gonzales 1983). Similarly in the hucksters' organizations women participate as leaders and organizers. It is the objective of this research to uncover the ways in which women derive strength and empowerment from these loci of "womanpower" and how they mobilize this strength to confront broader societal and structural power relationships that discriminate against them.

Like the discourse on power, the discourse on struggle and resistance has given little recognition to the daily struggles and survival strategies employed by women. Struggle and resistance have commonly been associated with uprisings, revolutions, rebellions, strikes, often involving violence and aiming to oppose, challenge or overthrow the powers that be. While these forms of resistance may represent the culmination of ongoing struggle, they represent only one aspect of resistance. A challenge for feminist political economist is to rescue this "unwritten history of resistance" (Scott, 1985), the everyday forms of resistance and struggle employed by the poor and marginalized to defend their interests and protect their livelihood as best they can. Hucksters are a group of individuals who traditionally have been marginalized in their societies. They have been subject to harassment, hassles, and legal constraints and denied technical or

financial assistance and respect. They have survived because of pure perseverance, ingenuity and cunning. This research explores to what extent and in what ways hucksters are engaged in this form of covert struggle. What "weapons" or survival strategies do they employ to meet their needs? How effective have their actions been? According to Diamond and Quinby:

Because so much of women's political activity occurs at the local level and stems from their involvement in the sustenance of life, they often manifest an ethic of activism that confronts domination without the smashing and terror so characteristic of masculinist revolutionary action. (1988, xvi)

To understand the nature and intent of their actions, therefore, requires an understanding of their consciousness about the social order and configuration of power relationships that affect their lives. Only then can one understand why their creative survival strategies take on the nature and form that they do.

Liberating Women's Subjugated Knowledge:

The Challenge of Feminist Political Economy

Much of the discussion in this chapter has focused on the epistemological problems encountered when dominant Western modes of knowledge or world view shape our understanding of the concept of development and of Third World societies such as the Caribbean. In development circles, the widespread acceptance of this dominant discourse effectively has suppressed local or indigenous knowledge about Third World realities, and alternative world

views that may exist within these societies. This tension between dominant and suppressed discourses is not unrelated to other tensions such as those between social structures, economic systems, cultural practices and gender relations which have characterized Caribbean society throughout its experience with colonialism, capitalism and imperialism. By the nature of these power relations, knowledge of the Caribbean has been constructed throughout history by Western categories of thought. As Stamp (1989) observes:

Given our immersion in the Western system of knowledge, it is hard to recognize the degree to which what is known about Third World peoples, how it is known, and how much is known is not what they have known about themselves. The very categories we employ, the systematization and generalization of knowledge about them, are products of our will for knowledge, rather than theirs. This knowledge is, moreover, a product of the power relations between the West and the Third World, and is a shaping force in those relations. (147)

Feminist political economy attempts to stand back from dominant systems of meaning which can and have distorted an understanding of Third World reality and gender relations. Instead it is committed to drawing local knowledges out from under these dominant systems of thought. The difficulty inherent in this task is that the penetration of the dominant discourse into societies like the Caribbean has not only subjugated local knowledges but also has alienated many Caribbean people from their own knowledge about themselves. This is particularly true of marginalized groups like the poor, the powerless and women. According to Foucault, subjugated knowledges are:

...a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity....It is through the reappearance of...these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work.... With what in fact were these buried, subjugated knowledges really concerned? They were concerned with a historical knowledge of struggles. In popular knowledge there lay the memory of hostile encounters which even up to this day have been confined to the margins of knowledge. (1980, 80-83 quoted from Stamp 1989, 132)

The aim of feminist political economy is to recapture and validate this knowledge, in particular women's knowledge, and reinsert it into the foundation of knowledge about the Caribbean and about the concept of development. So little is heard about marginalized social groups such as hucksters. No voice is given to their historical experience and struggle with dominant power structures. Even less attention is given to the gender dimensions of this experience. Of particular interest to this research is how a group of women, hucksters, perceive the configuration of power structures that have affected their lives and how they cope with, resist, and struggle to change this configuration.

Essentially, the challenge of feminist political economy research is to rescue women's history from dominant modes of knowledge and reconceptualize it within an analytical framework that maintains a dialectic between an analysis of how dominant power structures such as capitalism, have interacted with a sex-gender system in a

particular society, and women's own knowledge of their history and struggle.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Feminist political economy in its effort to broaden the discourses on work, struggle, the family, and development from their androcentric and eurocentric biases and reconceptualize them within the framework of Third World women's experience, demands a research methodology which effectively renders this theory practicable in and responsible to the reality of a group of women such as Caribbean hucksters. As elaborated in Chapter one, this research endeavours to explore several issues relevant to the lives of these women, namely:

- to what extent have dominant eurocentric and androcentric epistemologies shaped and influenced these women's understanding of their social reality and themselves?
- what is the potential of huckstering as an alternative and indigenous development strategy? What does "development" mean to these traders as hucksters, as women, and as members of a Caribbean nation and how has the developmental path pursued by Caribbean nation-states affected their lives?
- what are the details of these women's history and how does their history inform us about their situation in the present and prospects for the future?
- what are these women's experiences as mothers, household heads, and how are these related to their experience as hucksters?
- what is their level of conscientization of their position in society as traders and as women and how have their actions, through organizing and struggling for survival, both improved their situation as traders and empowered them as women?

In order to explore these issues, the methodological postulates of positivist social science research -- a value free, neutral, uninvolved approach, of an hierarchical, non-reciprocal relationship between research subject and research object (Mies 1986) -- are entirely inappropriate. Such questions and issues can be explored only through a deep and thorough understanding of the cultural context as well as through intimate and personal interaction with the women themselves.

This chapter was written in two stages. I began the chapter before beginning my field work in the Caribbean. It was important to me at that stage to elaborate the methodological postulates that I felt would satisfy the dialectic between the theory and practice of feminist political economy that I desired. The chapter was finished after I completed the field work. During this second stage I reflected on my methodological intents and detailed to what extent I was able to satisfy them in the field. Each section of this chapter therefore first outlines my methodological intent, and then discusses why these intentions were realized in the field or why they were not.

Resources for Knowledge: Third World Women's Experiences

Much of our knowledge within the traditional social sciences has developed from the perspective of the Western male. Thus it has asked only the questions about social life that appear problematic from within the social

experiences that are characteristic for white, Western, bourgeois, men (Harding 1987, 6). Consequently, many of the questions asked by poor, non-Western women have been inadequately researched and explored. This marginalization of these women's experiences, history, and concerns has led to a partial and perhaps even perverse understanding of social reality. The problematic of this research therefore is generated from the perspective of a particular group of women's experiences. The aim is to uncover women traders' history, experiences and struggles, and what their struggles illuminate about the broader social political and economic reality of the Caribbean and how they are indicative of forces that shape their lives. Material in the following chapters therefore has consistently brought women's experiences to the forefront, whether through historical analysis as in chapter three, or through the hucksters' own articulation of their present situation and struggles as in chapters five and six.

Many of the women I worked with were much more willing to talk with me about aspects of their family life and household than about the details of their trade. The women in St. Vincent in particular were much more forthcoming with details of their social life than with those about their income and trading activities. These women are protective of their interests and hence somewhat suspicious of researchers. As a result I steered my discussions away from

issues related to money, legality, and trade -- information which I knew I could obtain elsewhere. At the same time however the women did share with me their concerns about the long term aspects of the trade which could impact on the security of their households. They were concerned about the future of the trade in terms of competitiveness, the prospects of new markets, and further declines in profit margins due to changing economic circumstances in the region. To deal with these issues I have attempted continually to show the relation between the international or regional political economy and the household. Most of the following chapters therefore discuss both in an historical and contemporary context how changes in the international political economy have impacted on the household and the poor and how they in turn respond to these changes.

One concern some of the Dominican women had was with "feminist" research. The women felt that researchers from UNECLAC, who had conducted a recent study on the inter-island trade, had asked exclusively "gender"-related questions and because of this did not gain an accurate understanding of the totality of their lives. Originally it was also my intention to focus on the "non-economic" aspects of the trade. But as I learned from these women, you cannot isolate aspects of their lives without distorting the whole. Consequently in researching and writing this thesis I have

attempted not to focus on one aspect of these women's lives at the exclusion of the rest. At the same time I have reinserted aspects such as gender into historical accounts of the trade to provide a more holistic account.

Research for Women

According to Sandra Harding: "In the best of feminist research, the purposes of research and analysis are not separable from the origins of research problems " (1987, 8). Hence while this research may be useful to government departments, non-governmental organizations and aid agencies, its primary goal is to provide for women explanations of social phenomena that they want and need. Research for women is research that tries to take women's needs, interests, and experiences into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women's lives in some way (Klein 1986, 90). It is committed research that reflects the "view from below" rather than the "view from above" (Mies 1986). Hence it is not interested in the "spectator knowledge" characteristic of much research "on women" which provides only abstract analyses and prescriptions. Research "for women" is interested in helping those women involved in struggles to discover and develop their own theoretical and methodological potential (Mies 1986).

After being in the Caribbean and around the traders for some time I realized that I was much more of a spectator researcher than I had wanted to be. But given my time frame

and the schedules of these women, it was difficult to achieve more. These women are constantly on the move and often spend more time overseas than they do at home. This was frustrating for me at first because I was unable to have the long, intensive discussions with the women I had envisaged. Eventually I realized I had to conform my research methods to the reality as much as possible. At this point I began visiting the port regularly on Mondays in St. Vincent, watching, listening and talking to the traders when they had time. I would also sit with traders while they sold in the markets. I also decided to travel with the Dominican hucksters to Guadeloupe, to experience their activity cycle first hand. While I did have the opportunity to visit many traders in their homes and have long intensive discussions, I found the experience of "going through the motions" with them equally satisfying and informative.

In recent years the traders of St. Vincent and Dominica have become the focus of increased research by agricultural institutions, marketing agencies, anthropologists, sociologists and women's affairs bureaus. The results of the vast majority of this research have appeared in journals, policy documents, conference papers, and academic theses. While this research is useful, often the traders who were the subjects of the research do not see or have access to the information themselves. I was well aware of this fact while conducting this research and was concerned

not to appear to these women as another researcher who takes but does not give back.

The Traffickers' Small Business Association (TSBA) of St. Vincent and the Dominica Hucksters' Association (DHA) are organizations committed to improving the lives of these traders. Both organizations were instrumental in helping me define the priorities for the research and to meet traders individually.

Norman Pemberton, General Manager of the TSBA, met with me on several occasions, invited me to attend meetings with members of the Association, and shared extensive information with me regarding the history and current situation facing the trade. I had contacted the DHA prior to arriving in Dominica and the Association expressed interest in my research and made every attempt to facilitate it. Cecil Joseph, General Secretary of the DHA, introduced me to members, invited me to attend an agricultural conference with him, assisted me in arranging my trip to Guadeloupe with the traders, and provided me with access to numerous resources. As well, he referred others in the region to me who were seeking information the trade. This interaction between myself and the organizations contributed significantly to the development of my research. For them I provided a channel through which they could disseminate information about the trade and their own objectives and

perhaps seek financial assistance from bilateral assistance programmes.

There was little I could do to affect any immediate change or improvement in the lives of individual traders. However my presence did reinforce the fact that there is a surging interest in the trade which could have positive implications for these women. When they became aware of the objectives of my research and that I was not a tax or income investigator they were willing to support my research as much as possible. The video I produced was a key aspect of their participation. All the women who participated in the video wanted to tell their story to increase awareness and recognition of their work. The video attempts to capture the day to day experiences of these women articulated in their own words. I gave copies of the production to the Dominican Hucksters' Association and the Traffickers Small Business Association of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the traders to use for their own development purposes.

Historical Research

Rescuing Women's History

One cannot understand the present situation of Caribbean hucksters without understanding the historical context in which their present circumstances arose. Retrieving the history of an activity such as the inter-island trade or of a group of women such as hucksters however is quite unlike recalling the history of prominent

figures or events. Because much of what women do, or what is important to their lives, has not been regarded as proper subjects for history (Brereton 1988), and hence has not been documented sufficiently, attempting to retrieve and valorize this history is an arduous process. Similarly, informal sector activities have never been documented or explored as extensively as formal sector ones. Hence in order to make women hucksters the focus of enquiry, the subjects and agents of history, one must not only reread historical accounts about all aspects of Caribbean life that may have involved women and/or the informal sector, but in doing so must redefine and challenge received interpretations of these activities. Such was the challenge involved in the writing of this thesis.

As socially responsible feminist enquiry, this research also recognizes that women such as hucksters must also be involved in the recapturing and analyzing of their history. As Mies observes:

Women have so far not been able to appropriate, i.e., make their own, the social changes to which they have been subjected passively in the course of history. Women do make history, but in the past they have not appropriated ... their history as subjects. Such a subjective appropriation of their history, their past struggles, sufferings and dreams would lead to something like a collective women's consciousness ... without which no struggle for emancipation can be successful. (1986, 127)

Only by allowing women themselves to articulate their knowledge and perceptions about their past can one begin to understand the significance this history has played in their

individual lives. The women who participated in this research shared information about their history, detailing where they were from, what life was like for them years ago, what they learned from their parent(s) and how their position as traders has changed over the years. Many of them were very open about their childhood and struggles to survive.

Many casual observers believe that hucksters are "sweet-talking" women who have made a lot of money in a short space of time. Hucksters are aware of this stereotype and often annoyed by it because it masks the hardship they have endured to achieve their security. Hence it was important for them to share their history with me.

Using the Past to Understand the Present

The historical approach used in this research facilitates a dialectic between the past and the present. Hence chapters three, four and five provide more than merely historical background on the informal sector in the West Indies. Through an historical analysis of the development of the informal sector within the context of the political economy of the region, one can decipher and learn from particular socio-economic trends. For example, by studying the survival strategies Caribbean people have employed in situations of socio-economic crisis in the past, such as following the collapse of the sugar economy, or during the depression of the 1930's, one can understand better the

human response to crisis in the current period. The trade then can be analyzed, not as a "new" phenomenon, but as an historical element of Caribbean society that has manifested itself differently according to the changing political economy of the region.

This aspect of the research was very much in line with recent NGO initiatives in the region. The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) is currently pursuing a women's history programme and was very supportive of my intentions to retrieve the history of these women and their trade.

Conscientizing and Empowering Women

Research strategies which allow women to appropriate their history and participate in the process of recapturing it provide a valuable space for women to be able to contextualize their lives and their struggles (Young 1987, 9). In doing so they can better analyze their situation, understand the social, political and economic forces that have influenced it and draw practical conclusions. This conscientization of their political and social reality can lead a group of women, such as hucksters, to become more actively involved in promoting their own political and social projects. This may involve not only seeking solutions to their practical needs as mothers, wives, household heads, and traders but also the identification of

their strategic interests as women (Molyneux 1985; Young 1987).

It is equally important to realize that interactive research of this sort contributes not only to the conscientization and empowerment of the women who are the research objects but also to the researcher, who through the relationships she develops with her subjects learns to understand and support their struggles.

Lastly, research projects can better contribute to women's conscientization, mobilization and action when they link up with some local group (Mies 1986, 127), such as was the case with the Dominican Hucksters' Association, and the Traffickers Small Business Association, which will constitute a permanent base for their struggle.

Since many of the women interviewed were constantly "on the move" it became difficult and even impossible at times to sit and have drawn out analytical discussions with them. This was particularly true in St. Vincent where many women were interviewed on the wharf and in the warehouse as their produce was being prepared for transport to Trinidad and Barbados. Even under these circumstances however, it was still possible to discuss and analyze their political and social situation. This is largely due to the questions asked and issues raised. Rather than asking women various statistical questions such as how many kilograms of tannias or dasheen they transport in a month, or how much they earn

in a trip, women were asked questions such as how they see the present socio-economic situation in the West Indies affecting their livelihood, why they believe women outnumber men in the trade, and what they believe is the future of their country and what their role will be in this future. Such questions allowed the women to place their own situation, as well as the situation of their societies, into a critical perspective not only for the researcher but for themselves. Furthermore, because hucksters rarely receive recognition or commendation for the contributions they make to their societies, they may have a low self-image or regard for their work. Hence, I frequently stressed to the women the vital role they play in their economies.

Conscientization and empowerment however are not easily achieved in the course of one or two conversations. Such interaction however, can contribute to an ongoing process. I was not the first researcher to meet with these women, nor will I be the last. These traders are aware that they are becoming the focus of an increasing amount of research. And though the women did not state it overtly, I had the sense that in the process of participating in these various studies, they are realizing that there are those who share an appreciation of the work that they do. Interestingly, the women who had spoken with other researchers were most willing to speak with me and were also most proud of and empowered by their work.

Soon after arriving in the region I realized that facilitating a participatory research project would be difficult if not impossible. This was largely due to limitations in time -- both my own and that of the women traders. The four months I spent on St. Vincent and Dominica were insufficient to be involved in a truly participatory research project with these women. And the traders themselves have very little time to spare. Cecil Joseph, executive secretary of the Dominica Hucksters' Association explained to me how difficult it was for him to organize meetings for hucksters because members have such tight schedules. As a result members rarely meet on a formal basis. I believe however that a participatory research project is possible with these women provided that the researcher has at least a year to spend with the traders.

I was successful however in establishing a participatory relationship with the traders' organizations. The DHA and TSBA essentially have become the advocates of the traders' interests since the women have little time to engage in these activities themselves. Both organizations were supportive of my research and invaluablely helpful in introducing me to traders and familiarizing me with their activities. Their feedback on the directions for my research was also very useful.

Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity describes the dialectical relationship between research subject and research object that should be an integral component of all feminist research (Klein 1986). It involves more than making the research a participatory project whereby it is shaped and changed by the opinions of all those involved, both researched and researcher. It also involves placing the researcher in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter. This means that the research project should recognize the class, race, culture and gender assumptions of the researcher. "Thus the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests " (Harding 1987, 9). The objective is to replace the methodological postulate of neutral and indifferent value free, objective research with conscious partiality which encourages subjective identification with the research objects:

Conscious partiality is different from mere subjectivism or simple empathy. On the basis of a limited identification it creates a critical and dialectical distance between the researcher and [her] 'objects'. It enables the correction of distortions of perception on both sides and widens the consciousness of both, the researcher and the 'researched'. (Mies 1986, 123)

Hence though I could not relate entirely to the experiences and frustrations these women experienced as hucksters, I certainly could understand and share their struggles as

women and as an oppressed race. Similarly, having come immediately from Trinidad, being familiar with West Indian culture and society, and being married to a Trinidadian, I was accepted by the women as a West Indian sister which alleviated numerous communication obstacles. My husband, Keith, was with me for some of the time in both St. Vincent and Dominica. I was surprised at the difference his presence made when dealing with traders. Having him there with me seemed to give me more of an identity in the trader's eyes. I became a subjective individual with my own history and experiences rather than an "objective researcher." Together Keith and I were invited over to dinner at traders' homes, and our lives became the subject of discussion rather than the lives of the traders. In such situations I ceased to think of myself as a researcher.

Discovering our commonalities, and drawing on the interrelatedness of our experiences helped to break down the artificial subject/object split between researcher and researched which is characteristic of so much androcentric research. "Introducing this "subjective" element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the "objectivism" which hides this kind of evidence from the public " (Harding 1987, 9).

Methods

If feminists are committed to methodologies that critically reconstitute meanings of women's social

experience as women live through them and perceive them (Geiger 1986), then research methods used must provide an adequate framework to reflect this reality. The life history is a method used more and more by feminists to provide insight into women's lives.

A life history has been conventionally defined as "an extensive record of a person's life told to and recorded by another who then edits and writes the life as though it were autobiography" (Langness 1965, 4). This definition however has changed over time as the method has been refined by researchers, both feminist and non-feminist. The objective of life history method is to emphasize the requirements of the individual -- how the person copes with society rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals (Geiger 1986). Because traditional social science research has failed to encompass women's experiences and perceptions, life histories provide a way for these experiences and perceptions to be brought forward and rescued.

Furthermore, life histories embody all the above mentioned methodological postulates. First, they are women's accounts of their own experiences and hence rescue the "other side of reality" (that experienced by non-white, poor, non-Western women). Second, by allowing women to articulate their lives, and providing space for analysis, reflection, resolution and perhaps action, life histories can contribute to women's conscientization and mobilization,

and hence are "for women." Third, as oral histories, they are dynamic historical accounts, augmented with the feelings, emotion and "sense of being there" often absent from dry historical texts. As Stubbs (1984) observes "in oral history, the historian is no longer the outsider sitting before the documents trying to evaluate what has passed. The oral historian is part of the very process of creating history" (37). Lastly, the life history involves more than the mere telling and documenting of women's experience. Life histories are subjective accounts of individual women's experiences. Hence the researcher must be aware that the life story is as much about perception as it is about social reality.

The role of the narrator or researcher is pivotal in life history method. Life histories can be purely the researcher's account of another's life with no direct quotations from the subject. They also can exist as pure unedited personal accounts of a person's life in the form of diaries, journals or autobiographies. While researcher intervention and participation in the shaping and recording of the life history is acceptable, it is important that the degree of intervention is acknowledged. Howe (1990) outlines four research models. In the first the relationship between the researcher and her subjects is hierarchical, non-reciprocal, controlled and separated. In the second there is a gradual coming together between

participants and a degree of reciprocity is established. Model three reflects a holistic understanding of the subject's world. Intersubjectivity is achieved and life experiences are shared. According to Harding (1987) at this stage the researcher:

1. Listens to women informant's views about their lives and the lives of their men.
2. Listens critically to how traditional social scientists conceptualize women and men's lives.
3. Observes behaviours of women and men that had been previously seen as insignificant.
4. Generates problematics from the perspective of women's experiences, and uses these experiences as significant indicators of reality against which hypotheses could be tested.

The fourth model goes one step beyond the third model towards empowerment and change. Howe describes it as a participatory, collaborative, action-oriented partner relationship.

In retrospect, I would classify this research project as a model three type. Perhaps with more time and interaction a model four type project could have been achieved. But in my estimation this research has not crossed that threshold -- yet. The possibility for it developing into a more action-oriented project still exists however. As it stands this thesis presents and conveys an

understanding of these women's reality through both their interpretation and my own. Whether or not it becomes a vehicle for creating awareness and change will depend on how and to what extent I actively disseminate and follow-up on this initial research.

The Research-Interview Schedule

This research used life histories to learn about the lives of Caribbean hucksters. Rather than presenting the material autobiographically however, it incorporates the women's personal insights into the overall discussion, to validate, augment or challenge the material presented. Thirty women participated in the study. Personal profiles of the traders are provided in Appendix 1.

Most of the women were met on at least two occasions, some more often. Discussions were carried out at the wharf on shipping day, in the market while they sold and also in the hucksters' homes. The whole experience was like playing cat and mouse since these women are almost impossible to reach, let alone sit and speak with without interruption. Time to speak with me had to be squeezed somewhere between obtaining shipping documents, packing produce, buying boxes, loading the ship, selling to customers, haggling with customs officials, arguing and "cussing" with other traders, and attending to the demands of children and grandchildren. Needless to say, I often was not able to capture as indepth

an understanding of individual women's experiences as I would have liked.

Because this research was concerned with certain issues affecting these women's lives, the following discussion guideline was developed which highlights the issues of particular concern and corresponding questions which were posed to the women to generate discussion on these issues.

Issue: General socio-economic background of women

Questions: Do you come from a large or a small family?

Where is your family from? Did your mother work outside of the home? Where do you live now? How long have you lived there? Do you have a house or some land of your own? Is there a man in your life? How many children do you have? Do they live with you? What do they do?

Issue: Household economic resources

Questions: Do you do or have you done anything besides trading to earn income and support yourself and your family? Do you receive any financial support from your male partner? Do your children contribute financially? Do you receive remittances from anyone overseas? What sorts of expenses do you incur to operate your household?

Issue: Gender Relations with male partners

Questions: Are you married or do you have a steady male partner? How does he feel about your trading? Does he support your work? How? Does he take care of himself and the rest of the family when you are gone? Does he contribute to household income?

Issue: Women's understanding of the crisis in the region and how they are surviving as traders, mothers, household heads

Questions: Are times rough these days in St. Vincent/Dominica? How? Why do you think this is happening? How do you cope? Is it harder to raise and educate children these days than it was when you were growing up? Is trading more difficult these days? Why/Why not?

Issue: How trading fits into these women's lives

Questions: Why did you decide to become a trader? How long have you been trading? Can you see yourself doing anything else? Why do you trade internally or inter-island? Where do you trade? Have you always been trading the same items to the same place? Is it difficult to balance your life between trading and your other responsibilities and activities? Has the trade changed over the years? How?

Issue: Women's predominance in the trade and their motivation for becoming traders

Questions: Why do you think so many women are traders and traffickers? Are women better traders than men? Why/Why not?

Issue: The relationship amongst traders

Questions: What is the relationship amongst traders -- cooperative or competitive? Do other traders help you out? Has this situation changed over the years? Why/Why not?

Issue: Women's support networks

Questions: Who takes care of your children while you are away trading? Who takes care of the household responsibilities? While in your trading country where do you stay? Do other friends/relatives/traders sometimes sell for you? Do you rely on friends/relatives for support during the various stages of your work?

Issue: Do these women see themselves as forming the basis of an indigenous development platform?

Questions: Do you feel what you do is important for your country and/or the Caribbean? Why/Why not?

2

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

Issue: Women's interests and activities outside of the trade

Questions: Do you have any hobbies? What do you like to do with your leisure time? Do you belong to any social groups, church groups or other organizations? Do you have time for other activities?

Issue: The role of traders' organizations in meeting these women's needs and empowering them

Questions: Do you belong to any traders' organization? Why did you or did you not join? Has the organization helped you? In what ways? Has your participation in the organization given you more confidence as a trader and as a woman? What changes would you like to see in the organization?

Issue: Women's perception of government policy in general and in terms of meeting their needs

Questions: Did you vote for present government in the last election? Why/Why not? How do you feel about what the government is doing for the country? Do you feel current policies take into account the needs of people like yourself? Is the government interested and/or attentive to the activities of traders like yourself? Why do you think this is so?

Rarely was I able to cover all of these issues with the women. While I did steer conversations to some extent the discussions were very open ended and took many directions. If particular issues emerged as important to women I would revise the research schedule. While many trends and similarities emerged in the lives of these women I was less concerned with quantifying women's responses into percentages and more interested in their individual experiences. While these traders share a similar history and encounter many of the same challenges in day to day

life, they are not a homogenous group. Hence in the following chapters the traders are presented as individuals with individual life experiences.

There are several other factors or research methods which contribute to the establishment of a good relationship between the researcher and her/his subject. For example it is important to familiarize oneself with the culture and environment in which you are working. Living in the countries in which these women resided and traded allowed me to experience first hand the political and economic context in which they operate. It also enabled close and frequent contact between the traders and myself. In St. Vincent I stayed in the guesthouse run by The St. Vincent Union of Teachers, a local non-governmental organization. Members of this organization were extremely helpful in familiarizing me with the country and introducing me to other NGOs in the country. In Dominica I stayed at a guesthouse in Roseau which was close to both the central market and the port area.

Becoming involved in the women's activities also facilitated communication between us. I attempted to experience as much of their activity cycle as I possibly could by travelling with them, helping them load, and sell, sharing meals, and enduring the hot sun with them. The experience allowed me to understand their lifestyle first hand and not only through their words. I was most

overwhelmed by the physically demanding nature of the lifestyle. After one day with these women I was ready to collapse.

Linking up with local organizations and researchers was also an important factor in my research. This helped to establish my presence in the communities and contributed to an exchange of information and research findings. Overall, the more familiar I became with the environment and the lifestyles of these women the more open the lines of communication between us became.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORICAL AND GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE WEST INDIAN INFORMAL ECONOMY

Huckstering as an activity represents much more to Caribbean societies than is often realized. While it has come to be recognized as an economic activity, its significance as an historical and cultural element of Caribbean culture has yet to be fully appreciated. Embodied in the trade and the lives of the women who participate in it is a history of slavery, struggle, resistance, entrepreneurship, and African and Creole cultures. The history of huckstering also provides insight into Caribbean women's history and struggle for survival in Caribbean society since its foundations in slavery through to the current crisis.

This chapter infuses the history of huckstering within the broader history of the English-speaking Caribbean to understand not only how and why the trade evolved and survived as an economic mainstay in the West Indies but also to understand how the development of the activity has been mediated historically by the interplay of relations of class, race and gender in Caribbean society. In doing so both the history of a marginalized activity and a marginalized group of women is recaptured.

The Nature of Caribbean Economies

From the time of slavery through to the present the nature and form of the Caribbean region's insertion into the world economy has not changed significantly. Since the sixteenth century the islands of the Caribbean have been closely interwoven in the international economy as areas of European economic expansion and incorporation. The various territories have passed through periods of dependency on earnings from sugar, oil, bauxite, arrowroot and bananas for survival. The common factor in all territories however has been a reliance on a narrow range of primary product exports to the industrialized or "centre" countries. This is a situation that has prevailed in the Caribbean since the sixteenth century, and since then has made the region vulnerable to the vagaries of world trade. Similarly, since the establishment of the plantation sugar economy, the West Indian territories have suffered the imbalances of economies that export what they produce and import what they consume. Such a situation has never served the needs or met the basic requirements of the majority of Caribbean peoples. Consequently the "informal sector" has played a vital role in the Caribbean since slavery by absorbing the unemployed or providing alternative sources of income, serving the domestic market and meeting the needs of the people, and providing an avenue for creative and entrepreneurial expression.

An historical analysis of the political economy of the Caribbean reveals however, that while the activities, products, and relations of production within the "formal" sector and "informal" sector are very different, the two sectors are interdependent and intricately linked. As this chapter reveals, throughout Caribbean history the "informal" sector has responded to and been shaped by the insufficiencies in the "formal" sector, whether these insufficiencies manifest themselves in conditions of unemployment, exploitative working conditions, a failure to meet the demands of the local market or discrimination based on race, class or gender.

The Plantation Economy and the Origins of the Trade

The West Indian Corner of the Triangular Trade

While it is speculated that Caribbean huckstering's historical roots are to be found in the marketing traditions of West African women, the nature of Caribbean trading cannot be understood without understanding the dynamics of the West Indian slave economy. After the virtual genocide of the indigenous Taino-Arawak-Carib Indians in the British West Indies by European conquestors during the period of European expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries (Thomas 1988; Mintz 1971; Williams 1970), production and development in the region's colonies relied on imported labour, particularly African slaves.

As well as importing labour the Europeans imported various plants and animals for cultivation and rearing in the region (Thomas 1988, 16). The most noteworthy and significant crop introduced in the region was sugar cane which by the 16th century, due to mass sugar consumption in Europe, had become the most profitable agricultural commodity and laid the foundation for the development of the plantation economy. Mercantile colonial expansion based on monocrop sugar production transformed the region into what Williams calls "an appendage or satellite of European imperialism, its resources being drained away from domestic development to metropolitan aggrandizement ... " (1970, 47). During Britain's industrial revolution and the subsequent expansion of British markets, the plantation economy peaked in the Caribbean and a monocrop agricultural export economy based on sugar was consolidated in many territories. By the seventeenth century, the plantation economy and its attendant slave mode of production were firmly interwoven into the development and expansion of global capitalism.

The history of the West Indies is indeed one of the best illustrations of the relation between metropolitan centres and peripheral colonial regions and correspondingly development and underdevelopment. While the triangular trade was instrumental in the economic advancement and industrialization of Western Europe it also laid the foundations for the impoverishment and underdevelopment

manifest in the West Indies today. Intended primarily as extractive resource areas and not settler colonies, the West Indian territories suffered from a lack of indigenous commerce, technology, trade, manufacture and agriculture apart from sugar. Land was considered too valuable to be used for crops other than sugar, and the islands thus exported sugar and had to import food, nearly all necessities and luxuries (Fraser 1985, 4). This legacy prevails today. Similarly the European core states established strong centralized colonial administrations in the West Indian territories which served primarily the cause of capital accumulation and hence the interests of local capital were subordinated to that of empire interests (Stone 1986, 17-18). As Stone observes "the colonial state was therefore a capitalist state which defined its principal function as aiding the process of global capital accumulation" (1986, 18).

Gender Relations Under Slavery

While within the macrocosm of the world economy the West Indian plantation represented the incorporation of the Caribbean into the capitalist world system, within the microcosm of Caribbean society and culture, the plantation laid the foundations for social relations of race, class and gender which have survived until the present. As Lucille Mathurin notes, in slave society, "black women produced ... brown women served ... and white women consumed (1975, 2)."

Her comment aptly implies that gender relations during this period in West Indian history cannot be understood in isolation from relations of race and class.

Social organization in the West Indies was based on overt and deliberate racial oppression and segregation. "Colonial slave society was characterized by a dominance system rigidly defined by race and class and reinforced by an international hierarchy built on the colonized and the colonizers" (Wiltshire-Brodber 1988, 143). This system served the primary interest of the planter class which was production and profit.

Gender however, while it was not the primary determinant of social organization, was not an irrelevant factor. Rather it was a variable manipulated by the plantocracy to serve their best interests. Amongst Europeans, African women were perceived to be well suited to field work because of their perceived "drudge" status in polygamous marriages (Bush 1985, 28). African women were regarded first as slaves, no real distinction being drawn between themselves and their male counterparts. Therefore for the planter class the norms governing gender relations amongst Europeans were not expected or desired amongst the African slaves. Hence regarding the slaves working in the fields, gender was an irrelevant variable and men and women worked side by side. Evidence suggests that women

predominated in back-breaking field labour, often outnumbering men (Bush 1985; Mathurin 1975; Reddock 1988).

When it came to specialized tasks however, the plantocracy was discriminating in terms of gender. Men monopolized the specialized and prestigious occupations such as boilers, distillers, and foremen (Reddock 1988, 6). Women were allocated few specialized tasks such as domestic service or midwives. This gendered allocation of slaves to particular prestigious tasks reflects both the plantocracy's European notions of the value of different types of work, and their assumptions about gender roles. These values, however, while imposed on the slaves were not necessarily shared amongst them. For example, while female slaves may have recognized that a job as a domestic was more prestigious by European standards than field labour, it was in fact more restrictive to a woman's independence because it cut her off from her sisters in the field and left her under the constant scrutiny of her masters (Brereton, 1988). Hence her position was not enviable or prestigious amongst slave women because it further limited their valued independence.

Clearly, during this period, slave women were valued first and foremost as units of labour. The interests of the plantocracy were to exact the maximum amount of labour from both male and female slaves. Consequently little attention was paid to women as reproducers of labour. The notion of

the housewife, while it existed amongst the plantocracy, did not exist among slaves. In fact "traditional" female "roles" of mother, wife, and caregiver, were actively discouraged by planters. It was cheaper in the early slave period to buy a slave than to rear one. Hence planters made no concession for pregnant women or mothers with young children (Bush 1985). Women were too valuable as labour units to be accorded preferential treatment when pregnant. Similarly, the planters, to ensure that they, and not individual slave men, had control over women and children slaves, discouraged marriage amongst slaves. Where nuclear family situations occurred amongst slaves, they could be destroyed through the sale of individual members (Reddock 1985, 68). Such forms of social organization did not meet the needs of capital at the time. Under such conditions, slave women shared their masters' distaste for procreation. The thought of raising a child amidst conditions of malnutrition, abuse, and enslavement led many women to practice abortion and even infanticide (Reddock 1985). Women also expressed earnest contempt for marriage, associating it with extra work, and confinement to one man. Many women and men were used to several sexual partners. As Reddock (1985) concludes:

Thus the practices of the ruling class during the sugar era, determined by its production needs and international market opportunities, led to the emergence of a dominant ideology in which both masters and slaves found the costs of bearing and rearing children greater than the benefits. (68)

The realities of gender relations during this period support the contention that gender roles are not static or ahistorical but rather are shaped and changed according to particular contexts.

The Turn of the Tide:

Profiting from Gender Distinction

By the last quarter of the 18th century however, difficulties arose in the functioning of the plantation economy. As Africa's incorporation into the world economy as a producer of human labour changed to one of producer of cash crops and minerals, slaves became an increasingly expensive item. The 1807 abolition of the slave trade put a virtual stop to the importation of slaves from Africa to the British colonies. This in turn placed economic pressure on those colonies, such as those in the British West Indies, where slavery was still legal (Reddock 1988, 10). The response of the colonial governments in France, Britain and Spain was to introduce pro-natalist policies aimed at increasing the local natural reproduction of labour.

The pro-natalist policy package included the encouragement of nuclear families, with the granting of a comfortable house to a woman on her marriage, the restructuring of work hours for female slaves with children, improvements in the nutrition of pregnant slaves, restrictive laws regarding abortion and infanticide, and payments to mothers and midwives for children born and

delivered alive and healthy (Reddock 1985, 72; 1988, 10; Ford-Smith 1986, 157). In effect the preferential treatment women were denied in the early period of slavery when slaves were abundant was now being offered to them when the economic equation facing the plantation society changed. This institutionalization of motherhood met with resistance amongst both the planters and slave women. While planters realized that it was now necessary to breed slaves, breeding also meant that female slaves would be able to work less time in the field. Desperate to protect their profit margins planters often were not willing to make concessions to women, wanting instead only to keep working slave women as hard as their male counterparts. Consequently, the "reforms" were often negated or ineffectively implemented by planters (Bush 1985, 30). The strongest resistance however, came from the slave women who had become hardened in their anti-breeding patterns (Reddock 1985, 72). Hence in spite of the pro-natalist incentives the majority of slave women did not bear children or reproduce slaves thus deeply affecting the plantation economy. As Reddock observes, the planters' former ideology against motherhood had come to be internalized by the slave women thus demonstrating the way in which an ideology of ruling classes could for different, though connected material reasons, become the accepted ideology of the oppressed (1988, 10). Similarly, as far as the institutions of marriage and the nuclear family were

concerned, slave women were not willing to forfeit the relative equality they had inadvertently gained during slavery for domestication and subjection to one man whose conduct and future were insecure (Reddock 1988; Ford-Smith 1986). Consequently as Reddock (1988) notes:

...for more than 100 years, the majority of slave women in the Caribbean were neither wives nor mothers and by exercising control over their reproductive capabilities were able to deeply affect the plantation economy. (11)

Origins of the Informal Trade

The unsuccessful attempts of the colonial governments to control the reproduction of slaves contrasted with their success in encouraging slaves to grow their own food. It became an increasing burden for planters to provide food for their slaves as imported food prices increased with war and subsequent shortages. "Prolonged interference with the importation of food introduced a vicious circle of high prices, malnutrition, and reduced production and profits" (Mintz 1971, 181). The colonial states therefore decided to shift the responsibility for food production to the slaves themselves by allocating subsistence plots or "provision grounds."

By the late eighteenth century masters were bound by law to allocate land to each slave, male and female, for cultivation in their free time (Bush 1985, 40). On Saturday afternoons and Sundays slaves were freed from plantation labour and allowed to work their provision grounds. The land was used to grow a variety of foods, such as tree

crops, vegetables, and edible herbs and roots, as well as craft materials (Mintz 1971, 182). A system emerged where surpluses came to be exchanged at local markets for other commodities or cash which became the property of the slave (Bush 1985, 40; Mintz 1974, 182). Consequently, "market day", usually Sunday, became an established social and economic institution in West Indian society.

Given that both male and female plantation slaves were engaged in the production of marketable goods, there appears to have been no overwhelming predominance of either male or female vendors in the Sunday markets (Mintz 1974, 211). In the urban areas however, a more distinct sexual division of labour existed amongst slaves. The landless urban slaveholding population employed male slaves mainly as coopers, caulkers, bakers, masons and in other skilled tasks. Female slaves were employed as domestics, nannies, seamstresses and as traders. Many urban female slaves were involved in full time higglering, vending dry goods, provisions, handicrafts and baked goods to provide an income for their masters as well as their own material needs (Simmonds 1987). As Barry Higman (1984) notes, urban slave higglering offered many slaves a life separate from slavery:

Slaves were specifically employed in the sale of goods for the benefit of their masters Wherever they plied their wares and whatever they marketed, the urban slaves generally enjoyed a relatively independent existence and were always responsible for dealings in cash or kind. They worked under a variety of systems. Some sellers were given a range of goods to sell and were expected to deliver their daily takings to their

owners. Others were employed under a system of self-hire and were expected only to make fixed period payments to their owners, so that they were responsible for choosing and purchasing the goods they were to sell; and they retailed them by whatever mode they preferred. In either case, the seller was involved in a series of commercial transactions which could not be directly controlled by the owner and which provided experience of a way of life separate from the slave condition. (237)

Urban higglers also often acted as middlepersons for rural slaves, marketing their provisions in the towns.

This emergence of economic activity outside of the plantation system constitutes the beginnings of the "informal" sector in the region. The activities of this sector however, while different from those associated with plantation production, did not constitute an economy separate or autonomous from the plantation system. The *raison d'être* of the informal sector was the need of the plantation economy to economize on food imports. Its emergence was not spontaneous but intentional. The relationship between sectors therefore was a symbiotic one whereby the tending of provision grounds, marketing and higglering by slaves in fact subsidized the cost of plantation production and ensured its preservation.

The ramifications of allotting slaves subsistence plots and allowing them to trade their surpluses, however, were far greater than anticipated by the plantocracy. Paradoxically, the reluctance of the planters to supply their slaves with basic necessities, such as food, was instrumental in the development of the slaves'

"independence" and resilience. Bush (1985) cites numerous occasions where masters described the behaviour and temperament of their female slaves as "troublesome," "unmanageable," "refractory, vicious and indolent." She notes that "where women were intransigent in their formal work roles, their contribution to the informal economy, the cultivation of slave provision grounds, higglering and marketing, reflected a considerable degree of energy and enterprise" (1985, 39). Mrs. Carmichael, a plantation slave mistress in both St. Vincent and Trinidad in the 18th century remarked about her slave "C" who "was a torment to everyone" and "next to impossible to manage" as a domestic, yet, outside of her "formal work" she kept beautiful provision grounds and

kept a complete huckster's shop on the estate and many, both on Laurel Hill and the adjoining properties, bought thread, candle, soap and pins, etc. from her. She had always plenty of money ... She gave dances, and made a great deal of money by them: she paid for everything -- supper, liquor and music, and each negro paid half a dollar for admission ... (Carmichael 1969, 184-5).

The example of "C" illustrates not only the prominent and dynamic role slave women played in slave communities but also the degree of entrepreneurship, economic independence and self-reliance they acquired and exercised through their activities outside slave labour. Within the slave community therefore, both men and women had the financial means to remain independent of each other. This was quite in contrast with the position of the European women such as

Mrs. Carmichael who were essentially "privatized housewives" and entirely dependent on their husbands.

The growing entrepreneurial independence of the slaves worried many planters. Simmonds (1987), and Bush (1985) cite numerous examples of female slave higglers in Jamaica who ran away from their owners, stole goods to sell, or absconded with their owners' money received from the sale of provisions. Trading thus not only offered women independence from Afro-Caribbean men but also from their European masters. In a wider social context, women's mobility as marketwomen also facilitated communication between plantations and consequently these women became pivotal agents in organized slave resistance (Chase 1988, 30; Bush 1985). Higglering or huckstering therefore became a vehicle through which slave women could exercise the mobility and independence they desired. Furthermore, the trade became an outlet for their creative expression, entrepreneurship and demonstration of skill, all of which were stifled or suppressed in plantation labour.

Entrenchment of the Internal Marketing System

By 1800 slave cultivation and marketing had come to dominate the internal marketing system of the West Indian colonies. Slaves had become not only central to Caribbean economies as producers of cash export crops, principally sugar, but also had become the most important suppliers of foodstuffs and useful craft items that were consumed by both

Africans and Europeans (Mintz 1974, 196-9). Furthermore because of slave cultivation, the export crops of the West Indies experienced some diversification from sugar into other products such as arrowroot, castor oil, turmeric, and goatskins (Mintz 1974, 201). As Mintz (1974) notes in reference to Jamaica: "Had it not been for the slaves' skills as producers and distributors and their needs as consumers, there could scarcely have appeared in the Jamaican economy a numerous class of middlemen, import and export dealers and retailers (205)." Consequently many slaves possessed liquid capital and buying power which established a place for them in the free economic activity of the region.

The developing slave monopoly of the internal marketing systems in the region posed a serious competitive threat to established European traders. The response of the colonial authorities to huckstering was a constant spate of regulatory and suppressive measures which were met by the defiance of the trading slaves. Attempts were made to prohibit the trade in certain goods, to apprehend wandering traders, and to suppress the Sunday markets (Simmonds 1987, 36). By 1820 however, the slaves' growing importance to Caribbean domestic economies could not be ignored. This realization by colonial authorities was reflected in the amendments made to regulations at the time. For instance the "Laws of Jamaica" of 1826 stated that no slave could

travel about without a ticket signed by her/his owner except if s/he was going to market (Bush 1985, 41). The marketing system had become a permanently entrenched feature of local economies such that even the sharpest vigilance was relaxed to facilitate the marketing practices of slaves (Mintz 1974, 206). The authorities had to concede that by the 1820's the trading activities of slaves represented a deeply embedded social and economic institution.

The informal activities of the slaves no longer could be regarded as peripheral to the West Indian economies. Rather they had become central and necessary elements of its survival. The regulatory response by the colonial authorities to "formalize" and hence exercise some control over the activities represents a recognition of this fact.

Emancipation and the Development of the West Indian Peasantry

With emancipation in 1838, freed slaves faced the reality that from then on their material needs would have to be met through personal motivation and effort. Hence, most freed slaves, interested in repudiating their status as estate labourers, became peasants (Mintz 1974; Marshall 1985). The alternative would have been to return to the plantation as a wage labourer and/or tenant farmer. The conditions of this alternative however -- insecure tenure, low wages and high rents -- only reinforced the ex-slaves' desire to seek better opportunities elsewhere (Marshall

1985; Acosta & Casimir 1985). Hence many former slaves attempted to acquire land wherever it could be found, often on abandoned plantations or in the mountainous interiors of the territories. In many cases this involved flight from some colonies such as Barbados, Antigua and St. Kitts, where small size and a large population left few opportunities for land due to extensive sugar cultivation, to Trinidad, the Windwards, and British Guiana where land was available (Marshall 1985).

The African population's skills as provision cultivators and marketers prepared them for emancipation, enabling them to produce on their own land both for subsistence and for sale. It was these skills that formed the basis of the post-emancipation peasant economy. Even though for many ex-slaves survival meant combining provision cultivation with wage labour on the plantations, the profits made from provision cultivation provided many labourers with the eventual means to desert the estates for the "African" villages that were evolving (Marshall 1985). After emancipation many new markets appeared and with them the scope of economic activity open to the freed slaves increased (Mintz 1974). The emancipated slaves were in fact responsible for a healthy and valuable diversification of the British West Indian economy. Little regard however, was given for the peasantry's endeavours by the planter class. Having lost a large portion of their labour force to the

land, the planters continued to look unfavourably and discouragingly upon this peasant economy.

The rationale behind emancipation and the institution of wage relations was to transfer the increasing burden of the social reproduction of the slave population from the plantocracy and onto the slaves while still maintaining the labour supply. While this transition occurred effectively in the United States where slaves did not raise provision grounds it failed in the West Indies where slaves had a viable means for survival outside of the plantation sector. Hence, what had begun as an endeavour by the colonial authorities to sustain the plantation economy through cutting costs and ensuring an adequate supply of labour had developed into an activity that threatened the plantation's existence.

Housewifization

It was during this period that one sees the beginning of the ex-slave woman's economic dependence on men. According to one Vincentian planter in 1842 labourers were always "on the lookout" for land on which they could settle and allow their wives "to sit down" and "take charge of the children" (Marshall 1985, 4). Emancipation has been noted by several writers as marking the exodus of women out of visible and formal labour and into domestic and subsistence work (Lobdell 1986; Brereton 1988; Chase 1988, Hewitt 1987). Table 1 illustrates this trend.

Several factors may have contributed to this trend which continued up to the 1930's. First, whereas at the time of emancipation women constituted two thirds of the labour force, immediately after emancipation women were no longer the preferred labour force since their children no longer belonged to the estate owner (Reddock 1985, 75; Ford-Smith 1986, 160). Rather, in the wage labour sector, men were preferred, better paid and came to control the majority of available jobs. The wage and skill differentials between men and women strengthened the status of men as "breadwinners" (Reddock, 1985, 75). Hence the ideology governing gender relations amongst the planter class was now being imposed on the new "proletariat" through the medium of the market place:

As far as the planters and the colonial state were concerned, the African ex-slave woman was moving into capitalist wage-labour society. Theoretically her primary economic activity was now to be not the production of commodities for exchange on the world market but the production of the labour force and the reproduction of labour power, formerly the responsibility of the slave owner. Her position in the labour market was now only secondary to her responsibility in the household as a dependent 'housewife.' Her labour was now to be exploited on an irregular basis and at the lowest terms. (Auger, Gordon, & Reckford 1961, quoted in Reddock 1985, 76)

Table 1: General Worker Rates_a by Sex in the Commonwealth Caribbean 1891-1980_b

Territory	1891 _c		1911		1921		1946		1960 _d		1970		1980	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Antigua & Barbuda	82	74	N.A.		76		76	49	77	36	N.A.		57	33
Barbados	79	78	78	77	80	77	78	49	81	42	75	39	74	48
Belize	N.A.		N.A.		74	14	78	27	87	18	83	18	84	21
British Virgin Is.	72	57	N.A.		N.A.		78	12	87	17	86	38	84	55
Dominica	83	81	85		94		76	49	87	53	78	36	68	32
Grenada	79	69	75	68	73	70	66	44	77	37	74	36	70	37
Guyana	88	78	89		86	68	79	19	86	25	69	15	72	20
Jamaica	81	75	78	60	78	65	73	34	86	43	71	26	42	23
Montserrat	70	69	N.A.		74		73	56	80	42	78	33	73	42
St. Kitts	81	74	79	64	74	66	76	48	85	43	75	36	76	43
St. Lucia	91		82	76	85	64	79	51	84	40	76	32	72	37
St. Vincent	77		66	61	67	64	68	42	80	39	73	31	69	32
Trinidad & Tobago	87	74	86	65	85	63	79	26	69	28	63	20	69	27
High	88	78	89		86	68	79	56	87	53	86	39	84	55
Low	70	57	66	60	67	14	66	12	77	17	63	15	57	20

Source: Massiah 1989, 967.

_a General worker rates refer to the proportion of the total; population aged 15 and over who are actually working for pay or profit. They are to be distinguished from economic activity or labour force rates which relate the number of persons working and seeking work aged 15 and over to the total; population of the same age group.

_b Data for 1901 and 1931 have been omitted because of the small number of territories which conducted censuses in those years.

_c 1891-1946 refers to population 10 years and over.

_d 1960-1980 refers to population 10 years and over (except Antigua, where the 1960 figure refers to the 14+ population and the 1980 estimate to the 16+ population).

Hence women came to be defined as housewives whether they were married or not and consequently women's activities that emerged were those that could be centred around the household and were compatible with childrearing. Reddock (1985) suggests that to some extent this new skewed gender division of labour caused an increase in the number of marriages and the population.

Second, during slavery women had to endure both the drudgery of field labour as well as that in the home before and after their plantation work. Slave women, unlike their European mistresses, were not confined to the "private" sphere of the home. This sphere however was considered to be one of privilege. During slavery, only manumitted ex-slaves were allowed the luxury of marriage and privatized wives. Hence during the post-emancipation period many ex-slave women chose the private sphere which was denied to them previously and retired from the fields to the responsibilities of the home suggesting that to some extent the slaves had internalized the European notions concerning gender relations (Momsen 1988, 84; Hewitt 1987, 10).

Third, the demise of slavery coincided with an upsurge in Christianity along syncretistic lines. This revival had significance for the restoration of a socially sanctioned family life among the former slaves (Hart 1989, 19).

Last, the nature of the survival strategy available to the ex-slaves -- peasant production combined with wage

labour -- required a more reciprocal and coresidential economic relationship between men and women wherein men were engaged in wage labour while women combined production of crops and livestock and marketing with child care and housework (Brereton 1988; Edwards 1980; Mintz 1974). It was during this period that women came to predominate as traders in the internal marketing system of the islands. It should not be assumed, however, that these nuclear type family arrangements were patriarchal in nature. The Afro-Caribbean peasant woman, even though restricted or marginalized in the formal economy, still was a self-reliant person who fully expected to support herself and her children, while hoping for assistance from her husband or children's father(s). As Brereton (1988) notes: "the working-class woman in the Caribbean had always seen her proper role as multiple and flexible, as provider, mother and (sometimes) wife (135)." The nuclear family has never really taken shape in Caribbean society largely because the material circumstances of the majority of the people prevented the existence of the male breadwinner from becoming a reality. The female headed household emerged as a predominant feature of Caribbean social structure wherein African-Caribbean women, excluded from the "formal" economy, sought to provide for themselves and their children through non-wage work such as huckstering.

In effect what occurred during the post-emancipation period was that the social and cultural values surrounding the family and marriage that had been privy only to Europeans during slavery were now open to be adopted by the freed population at large. The concept of the housewife as the proper role for women was applied to the African population which enabled capitalists to discriminate against women's employment based on the male breadwinner model. Consequently the opportunities for African women's participation in society, social economic or otherwise, were restricted to specific avenues within the home and the informal sector.

The Sugar Crisis and the Consolidation of the Peasantry

In spite of the development of this vibrant peasant-run counter culture, the price of sugar continued to be the barometer of economic prosperity in the West Indies. For a century and a half to the early nineteenth century the Caribbean was the largest exporter of sugar in the world (Fraser 1985, 5). This comfortable stature however was not to last for long. West Indian sugar was losing its competitiveness on the world market. The mass exodus of emancipated slaves from the plantations further aggravated the impending crisis in sugar production. The planters however, rather than seeking to innovate the sugar industry to ensure its international competitiveness, remained bound to their conventional mode of production based on variants

of enforced labour. Thus indentureship began in many of the West Indian islands in 1837, importing nearly one half million Indians into the region. The rise in wage levels in response to the labour shortages caused by the slaves abandoning the estates was combined with a fall in the price of sugar as the protectionist pricing system of the mercantilist period gave way to free trade. Europe's industrial revolution shifted emphasis away from mercantilist trade patterns and monopolies of colonial markets to a search for enlarged markets by more liberalized trade to absorb the growing outflow of industrial exports (Stone 1986, 18). The export of agricultural staples from colonies became less of a priority and sugar exporters suffered. A sugar Duties Act passed by Britain in 1846 effectively brought an end to the protection previously given to British West Indian sugar planters (Thomas 1988). British West Indian sugar which still relied on archaic manufacturing techniques came to be outcompeted on the world market by sugar produced in Java, Australia, Cuba and Europe. This led to repeated bankruptcy and indebtedness of sugar planters and the refusal or inability of British financiers to extend further lines of credit to West Indian planters (Nurse 1986).

As the sugar plantation system weakened in response to the declining fortunes of the market for sugar, the balance of class forces changed in favour of the peasantry. Land

was more easily available for peasants as estates were sold or degenerated. Similarly, Crown land could be squatted on more easily as the planters' demand for land had decreased (Stone 1986, 18). Were it not for the change in the production patterns of the West Indian peasantry between 1850 and 1890, the West Indian economies may not have survived the crisis in the sugar markets. Marshall (1985) refers to this period as one of consolidation in which the peasant producers diversified out of subsistence and domestic production and into production for export:

Bananas, coffee, citrus, coconuts, cocoa and logwood in Jamaica; cocoa arrowroot, spices, bananas and logwood in the Windward Islands: these were the main export crops introduced or re-introduced by the peasantry after the 1850's. All of these were subsequently adopted by the planters and became important elements in the export trade by the 1870's ... This many sided activity of the peasants represented not only "a great new area of peasant advance" but also served as a vehicle for expanding the production possibilities of the region. (11)

By this point in time the peasant economy had consolidated both its vital position in West Indian economies and its interdependent relationship with the plantation system. Not only did the peasant economy sustain the region through the crisis in the sugar markets but many of the crops introduced and developed by peasants were incorporated and integrated into the production scheme of the plantations. Ironically when the plantation sector expressed only disdain and contempt for the thriving peasant sector in the early emancipation period, it now, out of

necessity, relied on the peasant economy for survival. Similarly, the peasants were broadening the scope of their production, from a concentration on subsistence crops to export crops, previously the domain of the plantations. Hence by the twentieth century the distinction between the "formal" and "informal" sectors became increasingly blurred as more and more the reciprocal relationship between plantation and peasant production came to constitute the foundation of the West Indian economies.

The Twentieth Century:

Diversification, Urbanization and the Neglect of Agriculture

Diversification

The turn of the century witnessed some significant changes in the international political economy that in turn had implications for the islands of the West Indies. As Europe's industrial sectors continued to expand, a highly monopolistic industrial structure emerged and the financial and industrial bourgeoisie replaced the landed gentry's hold over economic and political power (Thomas 1988, 37). There was a rapid increase in the amount of capital invested in the overseas colonies to finance the development and export of primary agricultural and mineral products which would be used to provide raw materials for Europe's burgeoning industries and food for its growing working classes.

In the West Indies, the ruling class finally came to realize that archaic modes of production employing enforced

labour and servitude could not compete with more innovative modes of production being employed by sugar producers elsewhere. Hence indentureship was ended in 1917 and the West Indian sugar industry experienced important changes in terms of technical innovation, management, production and ownership. In many instances private ownership was transferred from the bankrupt and indebted plantocracy to the newly emerged British transnational corporations hence instituting foreign ownership in the British West Indies (Nurse 1986). Economies of scale were desired and hence many of the smaller estates disappeared as land was consolidated into large plantations. These corporations also extended their interests into areas such as shipping, insurance and finance (Thomas, 1988: 39). At the same time, new industrial and agricultural activities were developing in the region, most importantly, bauxite, petroleum, bananas, and rice (Thomas 1988, 39; Stone 1986, 21). US and Canadian investments in these areas accelerated the expansion of the rapidly growing service and industrial sectors in many territories (Stone, 1986: 21).

The Effects on the People

These changes had considerable effect on the West Indian populace. Agriculture entered what Marshall (1985) refers to as the "period of saturation". In many of the islands the shortage of land caused by the consolidation of landholdings, the emergence of non-agricultural activities

which have competed with agriculture for land and labour, along with increased capital-intensive mechanization of agriculture have halted the expansion of the peasantry and undermined its competitiveness in export crops (Marshall 1985; Edwards 1980). As Marshall (1985) notes:

Industries like bauxite and tourism in Jamaica and oil in Trinidad have not only attracted the peasant away from cultivation on his own account but have also imposed limitations on the growth of the peasantry by occupying land which was either peasant agricultural land or land which might have become available for peasant expansion. (9-10)

Consequently several changes in labour and livelihood emerged in the domestic economies of the West Indies during these early decades of the twentieth century. First, in islands such as Trinidad and Jamaica where new industries were developing, many peasants entered the new proletarian class (Reddock 1980; Edwards 1980). Second, the unavailability of land and the growth of towns and urban labour opportunities due to the development of services such as finance and insurance led to rural-urban migration in many islands. Third, labour became concentrated in large factories and farms representing an accelerated increase in the concentration of capital and ownership (Stone 1986, 22). Fourth, the slump in the sugar industry between 1880 and 1921 encouraged high levels of migration amongst the African population in search of employment and higher wages. Also, in islands such as the Leewards and Barbados, where few opportunities existed for the displaced peasantry as a

result of the amalgamation of small holdings, emigration was a commonly sought solution. Between 1885 and 1920 the British West Indies had a net population loss of 130,000 due to migration. West Indians sought employment in the building of the Panama Canal, constructing railroads and working on banana plantations in Central America, building dry docks in Bermuda and seeking opportunities in the United States (Thomas 1988). Fifth, in the Windwards, where the peasantry has in fact grown for reasons which are elaborated in the following chapters, peasant agriculture continued to sustain a competition with the plantation for land and labour, with many rich peasants and medium scale family farms expanding into banana production for export (Marshall 1985, 10; Stone 1986, 23). However, the higher wage levels outside the region similarly encouraged large scale emigration from these islands also (Williams 1970). Lastly, many of the islands experienced a decline in agricultural employment as capital was substituted for labour in the sugar industry and the industry consequently employed less people. This further aggravated migration.

These changes had a significant impact on the informal economy in the Caribbean as well as on the lives of Caribbean women. First, while migration was a popular strategy employed for survival, it was a strategy common amongst men and not women. It was not uncommon and even customary for first preference to be given to men for

employment. Also West Indian women did not enjoy the flexibility of their male counterparts because of familial and domestic responsibilities. Migration consequently had a profound effect on West Indian household structure. The female-male sex ratio was exacerbated in many of the smaller islands and many matrifocal households emerged where women were the central providers (Momsen 1988, 86). Hence more and more women were forced to combine reproductive with productive strategies for survival. A rise in food prices in the mid-nineteenth century forced many women back into agricultural work in order to feed their families. Many women became agricultural wage labourers and hence between 1880 and 1921 there was a distinct female bias in labour markets (Momsen 1988, 86). While some worked as labourers on plantations, many Caribbean women became small farmers. Furthermore the agricultural workforce in the West Indies became predominantly female during this time as the female sex ratio was relatively high due to male migration (Chase 1988, 30). There was no wage differential for male and female labour in agriculture at this time (Momsen 1988, 86). As Chase notes women's role in agriculture was characterized by a push and pull situation:

As the economic base of many of the countries in the region expands, rural women are being attracted out of agriculture into other non-agricultural sectors and principally the enclave industrial sector. At the same time, as the rate of male migration (transient or otherwise) increases, women are forced to take over the management of farms. (1988, 31)

She notes however that it is mostly younger better educated women who are leaving agriculture while older, uneducated women remain in or return to rural production.

In Jamaica the decline in agricultural employment opportunities, coupled with the failure of non-agricultural production to expand significantly, led many women to migrate and seek employment in the burgeoning towns. Between 1911 and 1921 Edwards (1980) notes that 6500 women as compared to 3800 men had migrated to Kingston from rural areas. Employment statistics for women however do not suggest that they were absorbed into formal wage labour as Table 1 indicates.

The changes in gender relations caused by the economic conditions of this period developed a sense of independence amongst many women who were required to manage their households singlehandedly. Many also invested the remittances received from abroad from migrant family members in small plots of land which reinforced their economic self-sufficiency (Momsen 1988, 86). As the West Indian economies expanded and diversified the "informal" peasant economy essentially became the agricultural sector of the region's territories. At the same time this changing nature of the regional economies, particularly the growing urbanization, encouraged the growth of new "informal" survival strategies which, similar to the slave population's provision grounds,

presented opportunities for creativity and entrepreneurship not provided in the formal sector.

Economic Downturn and the
Institutionalization of the "Housewife"

Despite these new relations of production and the apparent diversification in output, the West Indian economies still remained very much locked into a centre-periphery relation in the world capitalist system. As Thomas (1988) notes, because the Caribbean's

patterns of resource use, production, exchange, consumption and class relations had been (and continued to be) mediated through colonial domination, a self-centred, autonomous development of its productive factors was impossible and the systemic divorce of domestic output from consumption became more accentuated than ever. (40)

The region remained dependent on the export of a few primary products which continued its vulnerability to the fluctuations in world trade. There was little development of indigenous science and technology and what was consumed was largely imported and did not reflect the basic needs of the majority but rather the tastes of the elite. The internal markets of these countries assumed secondary importance and if it were not for the informal economy the basic needs of the majority would not have been served.

Given the Caribbean's integration into the world economy, it could not escape the crisis of the 1930's depression and World War II. The Caribbean followed the course of world trade, declining precipitously towards 1930

(Phillips 1989). Unemployment rose, what industry existed suffered, the price of imports rose and not surprisingly the degree of social unrest, riots and strikes soared.

It was during this period in the twentieth century that women's independence was to be undermined. First, many men returned from Panama, Venezuela and other overseas work locations with patriarchal notions about women's role which they now saw as essentially home and child-centred. Furthermore, the world recession led to the social and labour unrest of the mid-1930's which produced fundamental changes in the workings of the labour market (Momsen 1988, 86). Several writers have noted the drastic decline of female wage-employment in this century (Roberts 1957; Lewis 1950; Reddock 1989). Reddock (1989) and Ford-Smith (1986) in reference to Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica attribute the situation to a firmer institution of a skewed division of labour, based on the "housewifization" of women, which was being imposed by colonial authorities and remained in effect through the early part of the century until the 1950's and 60's. Central to policy was the ideal of the male breadwinner/female dependent non-earning housewife. It was accepted that where possible, women, especially married women, should not be involved in income earning activity. Similarly a family wage concept prevailed wherein a man's income was assumed to contain within it the cost of the reproduction of his wife and children. Hence, women did not

need to work for wages. These policies had the effect of limiting the opportunities for female employment and were used to justify paying women a lower wage than men or employing them in the lowest paying occupations (Reddock 1989; Lobdell 1988). In Jamaica as a result of these policies the 1944 Census reported that the entire female labour force had declined from 219,000 in 1921 to 163,000 in 1944. According to Ford-Smith (1986) "the Caribbean housewife was at last becoming a reality (171)."

Despite the institutionalization of the housewife concept, many Caribbean households lacked a male breadwinner who solely could support them or lacked a male breadwinner altogether. Consequently many working class women accepted work as domestics or became petty traders because of lack of opportunities for employment or insignificant earnings (Edwards 1980; Reddock 1989). Gordon (1989) notes that in Jamaica in 1943 64% of women in the labour force worked in the informal sector (72). Brodber (1986) gives several accounts of Jamaican women who combined trading with other income-generating activities as a means of survival in the early twentieth century. Housewifization therefore served the interests of capital which could not remunerate the expanding labour force. Because women became classified as non-workers or dependents their unemployment and increasing economic burdens became invisible.

It was during this period that the internal marketing system expanded into a regional inter-island trade. Unfortunately there is little information available statistically as to the scale of the trade during this period. It is known however that small numbers of hucksters from the Windward Islands, responding to the regional food shortages and the high cost of imports, began trading provisions and livestock on other islands. Traffickers from St. Vincent are known to have sailed for two weeks to Trinidad to market poultry, pigs, goats, donkeys, mules and sweet potatoes (Lagro 1988; Pemberton 1990). Dominican hucksters similarly made the trip to Trinidad and Barbados in the thirties. The emergence of the inter-island trade does not represent a departure from the internal marketing system but an extension of it. Like the internal marketing system it relied on the interdependent relationship between small cultivator and huckster and continued to serve local human needs though on a broader scale. However, while internal marketing continued to be dominated by women, it was men who ventured into the inter-island trade. It is more likely that men owned small skiffs and boats to facilitate the trade and were able to spend a month or more away from home. These lengthy trading journeys are known to have established a sense of camaraderie amongst sea-faring men, a situation which changed when inter-island travel became more efficient (Lagro 1988, 8). Women's reproductive

responsibilities however made inter-island marketing, which required long journeys and absences, an unfeasible option for them. Hence they continued to rely on internal marketing and domestic labour for income.

Even though the inter-island trade was small during this period, its emergence reflects the ingenuity and entrepreneurship that was necessary for many Caribbean people to survive during this period. As well it illustrates their capacity to understand and adapt their activities in response to the needs of the people within the region.

Post World War II Development:

Pouring Old Wine into New Bottles

After World War II, the countries of the West Indies began to assert their independence, pledged to right the wrongs of colonialism and charted their own development paths. Consequently a fervent development dialogue emerged based largely on the theories of St. Lucian born economist Arthur Lewis. Lewis observed that primary agriculture in the region was incapable of providing enough jobs for the region's population let alone facilitating sustainable development. Since the concept of "development" had become equated with the concept of "industrialization" it was assumed that the development of industries was the necessary precondition for "take-off" in the Rostowian sense. Puerto Rico's development via industrialization was heralded as the

model to be emulated by other Caribbean nations.

Essentially the model dictated that countries like those in the Caribbean with no means of capital accumulation and no class of dynamic industrialists would fuel industrial expansion through "industrialization by invitation."

According to Lewis (1950):

The islands cannot be industrialized to anything that is necessary without a considerable inflow of foreign capital and capitalists, and a period of wooing and fawning upon such people. Foreign capital is needed because industrialization is a frightfully expensive business quite beyond the resources of the islands.

The central thrust of the model was development in manufacturing. The path followed was one of import substitution or import replacement whereby goods previously imported were to be produced locally. The aim was to diversify output and exports, reduce dependence on imports and earn foreign exchange, provide employment for a growing labour force, and absorb surplus labour in agriculture (Ramsaran 1988, 82).

Women were in fact a source of labour to which Lewis specifically referred. He noted the results of the early twentieth century housewifization policies:

In the first place women have retired from employment into the home. Thus in Jamaica, the ratio of gainfully occupied women to total number of women between the ages of 15 and 60 has declined from 78 percent in 1911 to 50 percent in 1943. The same thing has happened elsewhere, for example in the Leeward Islands where the proportion of gainfully employed women to women of 10 years and over declined from 73% in 1891 to 48% in 1946. (Lewis 1950 quoted from Reddock 1989)

Lewis observed the preponderance of women in petty trading, domestic service and casual labour, work that tended to be considered menial or "unproductive." This persuaded him of the need to increase women's productive employment, and hence simultaneously raise their status, reduce their drudgery and raise national output. This was to be accomplished by establishing a light manufacturing industry and offering women "jobs of the kind they do most easily" (Massiah 1989).

The Results

The unfolding of the model revealed however that this "new" development strategy failed to change the fundamental nature of Caribbean economies as export oriented, nor their unequal specialization into the world economy as primary product exporters to the "developed" world. The expected take-off in manufacturing failed to materialize. Instead the sector became monopolized by TNCs, heavily dependent on imported intermediate and capital goods and hence a foreign exchange spender rather than a foreign exchange earner (Ramsaran 1988). In terms of employment, only between one tenth and one eighth of the labour force increases have been absorbed. Employment levels in manufacturing actually dropped between 1960 and 1970 (Henry 1988, 186). Overall manufacturing has proven to be a parasitic enclave sector relying heavily on foreign exchange earnings from other

traditional primary products sectors such as mining, and export agriculture.

While the growth achieved in these sectors in the post war years has led to greatly expanded public and service sectors in the region, the development of both mining and export agriculture has been heavily controlled by TNCs and reliant on favourable and uncompetitive world markets (Thomas 1988). This situation has only perpetuated the vulnerability and dependency of Caribbean economies.

The Peripheralization of Domestic Agriculture
and the Working Class Woman

Perhaps the most serious result of the post WWII development model was the decline and neglect of domestic agriculture. The developmental thrust towards industry and export crops manifested itself in a real neglect of peasant production. Without a consistent set of policies relating to incentives, reorganization, protection, techniques, extension services, and marketing assistance, agriculture tended to stagnate (Ramsaran 1988, 85). Furthermore, as prestige and higher earnings came to be associated with the developing industrial and service sectors, there was an increasing urbanization of the populations of the various territories as many left agriculture in pursuit of what they perceived as better opportunities. Thomas notes that in the 1950's approximately half the region's economically active

population was in agriculture whereas three decades later this figure has dropped to one quarter.

It is important to note however that there has been a certain unevenness in the development of the region. In the West Indies, industrialization progressed fastest in Trinidad and Jamaica, countries with the largest domestic markets. The smaller islands, like the Windwards had little infrastructure to attract foreign investment and hence remained heavily dependent on agricultural production. However, agriculture in these islands remains in a precarious and unstable condition. During the post war period agriculture has moved more and more towards export orientation with a greater percentage of small farmers (predominantly male) moving into export crops and away from subsistence farming. Consequently what is produced is more intended for the export market than for home consumption and hence resources have been directed away from domestic food production. In Dominica for example, after the banana boom, nearly 70% of the farmers who previously produced for subsistence no longer did so (Thomas 1988, 123). Not surprisingly the food import bill in many of the territories is extremely high. As Thomas (1988) notes:

The net result was that although much of the region's human, financial, technical and land resources were tied up in agriculture, the sector had been so badly neglected that by 1970 the food balance sheet of the area had gone into deficit. Over 50 per cent of the food consumed in the area was being imported (in Barbados, Antigua and Trinidad-Tobago this estimate was over 80 per cent) at a cost of approximately US\$1,000

million, in other words the equivalent of Barbados's total national output, five times Guyana's and double that of all the Leeward and Windward Islands combined. (127)

The general failure of the model also failed to "liberate" women as Lewis had intended. With the neglect of domestic agriculture the basis of many women's livelihoods became jeopardized. The shift to export crop cultivation has displaced many agricultural workers, particularly women who relied primarily on the cultivation of subsistence crops. Whereas at the turn of the century women dominated the agricultural labour force, by 1970 only one third of agricultural workers in the Caribbean were women (Chase 1988, 31). In Dominica alone, women's employment in agriculture dropped by 60% between 1945 and 1960 (Lagro 1990, 6). Many women left agriculture to seek what they perceived as better opportunities and higher status occupations in the urban formal sector.

Women continued to play an important role however in peasant subsistence agriculture. Female farming was and continues to be most common on subsistence holdings (Momsen 1988, 87). Even this type of farming however has declined over the last two decades as the economic base of most islands has widened and alternative opportunities in the labour market have become available.

The employment gains promised in the manufacturing sector did not materialize however and many of these women remained unemployed or employed in low level service

occupations such as waitressing or cleaning. Overall, working class women entered the labour market at a rate faster than they could be absorbed into employment. As a result many women were crowded into urban slums where prostitution and teenage pregnancies abounded (Wiltshire-Brodber 1988, 149).

With the expansion of the service and public sectors however opportunities for middle strata women were expanding in areas such as health, education, and clerical work. The job market remained segmented however with women tending to be ghettoized into particular occupations and consistently earning less than men in all major occupational groups (Gordon 1989, 76-7). Similarly Gordon (1989) notes for Jamaica that throughout the post war period domestic service continued to be the area employing the greatest number of women (71). Hence despite the employment gains in the service sector the number of women employed in white-collar occupations was relatively insignificant in relation to the total number of women eligible for employment (Reddock 1989, 59) and consequently general worker rates amongst women continued to drop throughout the period (Massiah 1989, 967).

Effects on the Inter-island Trade

While general participation in the informal sector declined in the post war years as employment opportunities grew in the mining and service sectors (Reddock 1985), significant changes occurred in the inter-island trade. It

was out of the situation where both domestic agriculture and employment opportunities for poor women were peripheralized that women emerged as the principal participants in the trade. The establishment of regional integration schemes such as the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) and the Guaranteed Market Scheme in the 1960's facilitated the intra-regional trade of agricultural produce. During this time domestic marketing boards and private exporters played a larger role in the trade of products such as rice, coconut oil, fruits, vegetables, ground provisions and petroleum in the region (Cuales & Lagro 1987, 4). However as the region's formal sectors moved into extra-regional export agriculture or out of agriculture altogether, the intra-regional trade and the attempt at regional cooperation in local foodstuffs declined. The inadequate infrastructural factors, unguaranteed profitability, and other difficulties of communication and efficiency that characterized domestic production presented unattractive conditions for the established institutions and private sector (Cuales 1987, 4).

The demand for local foodstuffs remained however, particularly in the industrializing countries like Trinidad where hoards of people were leaving agriculture for employment in other sectors. It was during this period that many poor women in the Windward Islands began to enter the trade on an informal basis. These women stepped in to

market the remaining surplus of perishable goods. Unlike the private institutions these women were willing to work under poor conditions, for long hours and take the risks the trade presented. In the Windward Islands few income earning opportunities existed for women with minimal education, outside of market vending and domestic work. Hence when inter-island transportation became more efficient many women left domestic work and the competition of the internal marketing system for the independence and greater returns which seemed to be available through the traffic of produce regionally. They also provided a market for the many small farmers in the region involved in the production of domestic crops for home use or local sale. Many small farmers, many of whom are women, are unable to farm as well as market their goods. Hucksters and traffickers therefore became these farmers' links to regional markets. Presently these traders control 90% of the inter-island trade, with the other 10% being carried out by marketing boards and private exporters (Lagro 1988, 6). During this period traders are known to have travelled as far north as Jamaica and as far south as Trinidad (Lagro, 1988: 9).

The Formal-Informal Relationship:

Disharmonious Development

Since the development of the informal economy beyond the expectations and desires of the formal plantation sector during the slavery era, an uneasy tension and precarious

relationship has existed between the two. While both were fundamentally created to serve the same purpose -- the accumulation of capital in Europe -- their relations of production and internal dynamics diverged. The foundation of the formal, plantation sector was the extraction of resources in the interests of foreign markets and an elite domestic minority. It enslaved its labour and imposed foreign values and inorganic modes of production upon it. It did little for the African majority beyond exploiting it in every possible way, and made no significant contributions to the development of the West Indies. The informal peasant sector however was based on subsistence and survival. It was rooted in the African traditions of farming and marketing, served the needs of the domestic majority, and nurtured their independence and creativity rather than stifling them. Women in particular enjoyed a freedom and equality of opportunity denied to them in the plantation economy, especially in the post-emancipation period. It is no wonder therefore, that given the same human resource pool, one sector thrived and the other did not.

Furthermore, the formal sector in the West Indies traditionally has been a reactive one, relying on archaic production relations and responding to the changes in the world economy often too late. The plantation economy was unprepared to deal with the changes caused by emancipation or the decline in the sugar industry. The development of

the informal sector however has been more proactive, keeping abreast of the situation in domestic markets and responding creatively and promptly. The diversification of crops and the development of the inter-island trade are notable examples.

In spite of the reality that the majority of Caribbean people were more creatively involved in the resources of the informal economy, the developmental path of the region was still determined by the interests of the colonial authorities which lay within the formal sector. The formal sector's attitude toward the informal sector however was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand it had sustained the plantation economy during periods of crisis, whether by subsidizing the costs of slavery, developing new export crops in the late nineteenth century, or absorbing the unemployed during the 1930's depression. On the other hand it was not desired or intended for the peasants' activities to dominate or constitute the foundation of the West Indian economies. Hence while the peasants' activities were allowed to coexist with the primary formal sector their contributions to the region were marginalized and regulated so as to avoid competition with the formal economy. And when new poles of growth appeared in the mining and oil industries, peasant activities were of minor importance. Little interest was expressed in developing and supporting the peasant economy, or transforming the productive

structures of the formal sector to better serve the needs of the majority.

This is not surprising however, given that it was never the intention of the Europeans to develop the West Indies in the interests of the majority of its inhabitants. What is surprising is the fact that in the post WWII period, when the peoples of the West Indies began to assert their independence and influence the developmental path of the region, the informal sector still remained marginalized. Despite the creativity and indigenous development potential exemplified in the informal economy, West Indians had internalized the developmentalist ideology of the Europeans. Thus, the development path pursued reinforced rather than alleviated the disharmony between the formal and informal sectors, industry and agriculture, and domestic production and consumption.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE-INTER-ISLAND TRADE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WEST INDIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

The Model in Crisis Since 1970

The current crisis in the region is perhaps the clearest manifestation of the failure of the post war development model. The changes in the global economy since 1970 -- slow growth, economic sluggishness and decline in the industrialized countries, spiralling inflation, rapid technological change resulting in the reduction in demand for raw materials, and the oil price shocks (Harker 1989, 11) -- have had a profound impact on the Caribbean. Although Trinidad and Tobago prospered in the 1970s because of the oil boom, the extreme trade dependence and relatively limited economic diversification of the Caribbean countries made them especially vulnerable to changes in the world economy (Phillips 1989, 49). Imports continued to rise more rapidly than exports. Exacerbated by deteriorating terms of trade and payment, deficits worsened and unemployment massively increased throughout the seventies.

Agriculture experienced further declines not only in its relative capacity to earn foreign exchange but also to satisfy the needs of the domestic population. In manufacturing, because imported inputs have become more expensive or unavailable due to foreign exchange shortages,

little if any growth has occurred in this sector. Furthermore, Caricom trade has contracted due to the need to conserve foreign exchange and because industries have been rendered increasingly uncompetitive due to declining investment and outmoded plants and equipment (Harker 1989, 16).

This chapter examines both the "formal" and "informal" responses to this current crisis. Though inter-island trading in agricultural produce has grown over the past two decades it is not the only type of informal trading that has emerged during this period. It is important therefore, before beginning an indepth examination of the trade of agricultural produce, to highlight the various other dimensions of informal trading that have emerged in response to the changing regional and international political economies.

The Formal Response

In the current period the IMF/World Bank sponsored structural adjustment package is being espoused as the panacea for the economic woes of every Third World country. Over the past twenty years, one by one, Caribbean countries have implemented the policy package and today structural adjustment is the most influential development strategy in the English-speaking Caribbean. The main features of the structural adjustment policy package are:

- i) devaluations,

- ii) reductions or severe restraint on government expenditure on social services, especially health, education and employment,
- iii) divestment of state-owned enterprises to the private sector,
- iv) encouragement of foreign investment,
- v) liberalization of import controls and removal of protection for local manufacturing industry,
- vi) removal of domestic price controls,
- vii) subsidies to exports and other mechanisms for export promotion such as the promotion of 'Free Zones', '807'¹ industries, CBI [Caribbean Basin Initiative] industries, using cheap labour as the main attraction. (Girvan 1989, 18-19)

The main objective of these measures is to stabilize the balance of payments and to service the external debt. At the same time the economy is opened up to imports and foreign capital with the role of the state minimized and that of the private sector entrenched (Girvan 1989, 19).

Essentially this strategy does not change the fundamental export-oriented import-dependent nature of West Indian economies. While manufactured goods are now produced at internationally competitive prices, profits continue to be repatriated abroad, domestic sourcing and value-added (outside of cheap labour) are minimal, and technology continues to have an inorganic relation with the needs of the society. Therefore this strategy, like those of the

¹ "807" is a tariff scheme established by the United States government in the 1960's to permit the duty free entry of US components sent abroad for processing or assembly.

past, continues to perpetuate the West Indies' dependency and unequal specialization in the world economy.

These measures have severely affected Caribbean households, 40% of which are headed by women. Antrobus (1990) argues that structural adjustment policies, rather than failing to take women into account, are actually "grounded in a gender ideology which is deeply exploitative of women's time and labour" (1). On the consumption side incomes have been reduced as a result of the increased unemployment due to divestment in public firms and cuts in social services. Prices have increased on basic commodities resulting from the removal of food subsidies as well as from devaluations. And the poor, particularly women, have increased burdens as providers of social services (Antrobus 1989, 147; McAfee 1990, 14-20). On the production side a model of export-oriented production based on export processing zones is based on the exploitation of cheap female labour. Furthermore in agricultural production, the promotion of non-traditional export crops jeopardizes women's contributions in this sector because it undermines production of food for local and regional markets -- areas in which women predominate as farmers and marketers (Antrobus 1990, 3).

Caribbean people have not taken the effects of structural adjustment without resisting, however. People have organized protests in several countries and many

grassroots organizations and movements representing low-income earners and working women have become vocal and articulate critics not only of the harsh impact of the austerity measures but also of the undermining development potential they entail (McAfee 1990, 15). In spite of these protests the austerity measures remain in place throughout the region and continue to be declared as the necessary solution to the economic woes of the time. Consequently the poor and powerless in the Caribbean have taken it upon themselves to ensure their own survival in these difficult times. Hence, informal sector activity has emerged during the current crisis as a key survival strategy.

The Informal Response

The reality in the present period is that large sectors of the population of these countries are unable to meet their basic needs by relying exclusively on wage work. Structural adjustment has aggravated this situation. Consequently a significant proportion of men and women have been forced to seek forms of survival by engaging in different kinds of income-generating activities outside the formal wage labour sector (Riviera 1989).

The growth of informal activity in the current period however is not unlike other periods when this sector has experienced growth. As in the past the sector continues to provide a means of survival for large numbers of people, its activities tend to be small scale and individualistic, it

continues to cater to the domestic/regional market, responding to the demands of domestic markets not met by the formal sector, and still acts as a security/welfare net for those not absorbed into the formal wage labour sector. In the contemporary period the role of the informal sector remains essentially unchanged in these aspects. The range, character and organization of activities however have changed.

To understand the particular features of huckstering/trafficking in the contemporary Caribbean, one must analyze the changes in national political economies within the broader context of the changes regionally and internationally. The remainder of the chapter briefly discusses some significant contemporary features of informal trading in the region. These features are in turn elaborated in the specific contexts of St. Vincent and Dominica in the case study which follows.

Dimensions of the Informal Trade in the Current Period

The Predominance of Women

Women have historically had strong representation in the informal sector and continue to dominate in it. With structural adjustment, economic pressures have forced more women to seek employment at a time when the reduction of social services has increased the need for the non-paid but essential work traditionally done by women (McAfee 1990, 18). For women with limited educational background or

technical training formal sector jobs are often limited to those available in export processing zones where wages are low, conditions of work poor, and schedules rigid. Consequently many women have turned to the inter-island trade as a more realistic option.

Entry and success have been more possible in recent years for several reasons. First, improved and faster transportation facilities between islands have enabled women to carry out their trade with more flexibility. Second, the massive inter-regional migration which occurred in the post war period has enabled women traders to establish and utilize kinship and friendship networks throughout the region to facilitate their trade. Third, many men have dropped out of the inter-island trade over recent years due to declining revenues since the sixties, leaving room for women, who generally are more likely to accept lower returns. Presently, women account for over 80% of the participants in the trade. The particular reasons for this predominance and the implication it has had for both the trader and women's lives is explored in detail in chapter six.

Growth of the Two-Way Trade and

The Emergence of the Informal Commercial Importer

Caribbean countries have traditionally been quite import dependent. Throughout history West Indians have been heavy consumers of foreign goods and the structure of

Caribbean economies and the taste patterns of the people are evidence of this fact. Hence, in spite of austerity measures which have devalued currencies (thereby increasing the cost of imports) the bill for imported food and consumer goods continues to rise. At the same time Caribbean exports do not earn the regional economies enough foreign exchange to supply this demand. As a result several countries have had to place restrictions on foreign imports, substituting locally produced products where possible.

Caribbean peoples' foreign taste patterns however have been developed over centuries and are not easily changed. Regional hucksters are keenly aware of this fact and are responding to domestic demand where governments are unable, even if it means thwarting government development strategies. An illustrative example is the case of Guyana in the late 1970s. During this time the shortage of foreign exchange in the economy brought about a decline in commodity prices and reduced the capacity of Guyana to import popular consumer items such as flour, split peas, garlic, powdered milk etc. To save foreign exchange the government decided to place a import restriction on wheat flour and encourage the use of locally produced rice flour as a substitute. This decision incited an extremely negative response amongst the Guyanese population who were wholly unsatisfied with rice flour. Eventually wheat flour became traded by hucksters on the parallel market -- an illicit trade which

grew to huge proportions and has diversified to other products.

To acquire their goods Guyanese traders sell locally manufactured gold jewellery, garments, and straw baskets in neighbouring territories and buy food, drugs and school supplies to sell at home (Massiah 1989, 968). Trafficking, mostly by women, in Guyana continues to provide a substantial quantity of the goods, spare parts and other inputs needed by consumers (Holder 1988). The volume and content of this form of inter-island trading are determined by shortages in the importing country and the gains that can be captured from currency conversion on the various transactions (Massiah 1989, 968).

Since the mid-seventies a new type of trader emerged in response to import shortages and restrictions in the region. Known as Informal Commercial Importers (ICIs) or "Suitcase Traders" these traders, predominantly from Jamaica and later Trinidad, board planes or boats at home and leave for destinations such as Panama, Curacao, Haiti, Caracas, and the United States, to shop for goods for resale in domestic markets. Consequently a proliferation of goods not available, or very scarce, in the normal commercial outlets began to be offered on the sidewalks of urban centres like Kingston or Port of Spain. In Jamaica these locations became popularly known as "bend down" plazas, as patrons had

to bend down to examine the goods for sale at ground level (Taylor 1988, 3).

The activities of these traders have not gone unnoticed by authorities and established merchants who view this informal vending as a nuisance and competitive threat. The present tension between established merchants and traders is in fact similar to the competitive situation, discussed in chapter three, between higglers and merchants during slavery.

The Changing Profile of the Trader

At different periods of history huckstering has been dominated by different groups of people. In the contemporary period when jobs are scarce for all, particularly young adults, one can see people from various socio-economic backgrounds entering the trade. In Jamaica the category of "commerce" has been increasing its share of the total labour force over the last ten years. And it is mostly self-employed women operating as traders or ICIs who account for the increase (Taylor 1988, 11). Traditional traders are now being joined by men and younger women, who are likely to have secondary education and often white collar professional experience (Massiah 1989, 968). Several months ago a twenty-four year old Guyanese male engineer was telling me about all the places in North and South America he had visited on business. I was surprised that his work had carried him to such a diversity of locations until I

discovered that it was his other profession as a huckster that had facilitated his travel. Combining formal sector work with informal sector work, or leaving a formal sector job altogether to take up huckstering, are not uncommon occurrences amongst traders. These phenomena are illustrated in the case study in the following chapters.

The Growth in Contrabanding

As economic and social conditions in the Caribbean have worsened as a result of the current crisis it is no surprise that many people are seeking illegal avenues for securing income. While the "black market" is often seen as a sub-sector of the "informal sector", in the current crisis the distinction is not so clear. Illegal trade is often combined or camouflaged by legal trade. Little information is documented on the illegal trade because traders are not forthcoming with information. Nevertheless the fact that contrabanding goes on is commonly known. Essentially three types of contraband activity are or have been evident during the current crisis: traffic in drugs, the smuggling of goods like gold or alcohol, and currency racketeering.

As elaborated in chapter five, drug trafficking has apparently secured a comfortable life for many traders of agricultural produce from the Windward islands. Ganja smuggling also has been allegedly linked to the trade out of Jamaica as the amount of goods taken out of the country for sale could in no way have been sufficient to cover the

amount of goods brought in and the expenses incurred in the importation of these goods (Taylor 1988, 21).

Similarly whisky, which had lower import duties in the Windward islands, was also a highly demanded item in Trinidad and hence sacks of dasheen or copra often concealed a bottle or carton of the spirit. Gold is smuggled out of Guyana by Guyanese traders and used for exchange in other countries. Many female traders adorn themselves with extensive gold jewellery to escape detection of smuggling at customs.

Lastly, many countries offer black market exchange rates for foreign exchange, particularly US dollars. ICIs require foreign currency for purchases abroad so will often pay black market rates at home. As chapter five details, during the seventies and early eighties inter-island traders to Trinidad similarly profitted from these transactions.

Regional Differentiation

While the informal economy in the Caribbean has grown in response to the current crisis, its expansion has not been uniform throughout the region. There are differences therefore between the type of informal trade emerging from Guyana and that from Dominica. This differentiation stems from levels of economic and social stress in particular countries, the nature of individual economies, and the nature of their insertion into the international political economy.

There are similarities in the nature and form of informal trading in Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad. All three are considered to be moderately industrialized and have gone through periods of boom and bust since WWII. The boom days in these countries are but a distant memory in the present where these economies are struggling to survive amidst increasing unemployment, poverty, political and social unrest, and escalating crime rates. Not surprisingly the informal sectors in these countries have expanded significantly, particularly informal commercial importing and illicit activities.

The type of trade evident within these countries is a product of their industrialization experience wherein a disdain and neglect of agriculture developed and the population swelled in urban areas in search of jobs in the industrial and service sectors. The downturn in these economies has resulted in numerous currency devaluations, foreign exchange shortages and import restrictions. Consequently for the consumer in these countries all those goods which were once readily available and affordable are now unavailable or unaffordable. The taste patterns and demand however are still there and hucksters from these countries are now supplying the demand the formal economy cannot meet.

Guyana is perhaps the most extreme example wherein the informal economy has become the economy, the formal sector

having essentially become dysfunctional and/or dependent on the informal sector for survival. Guyanese traders are vital suppliers to large and small businesses, private individuals, boutiques, offices, and private or state-owned enterprises within the country. Their domestic transactions are facilitated through corruption or bribery. It is reported that in Guyana a visa can be purchased for G\$6000 or one ounce of gold, and income tax clearance can be exchanged for jewellery, cash or certain commodities purchased overseas (Holder 1988, 32-35).

A certain amount of leniency seems to be exercised in all three countries on the part of customs officials, who are well aware of and affected by domestic shortages and hence are apt to turn a blind eye when traders declare a load of consumer imports as personal effects. For instance, my friend the Guyanese engineer recounted to me the time he had returned from abroad with a ample supply of baby bottles, at that time highly in demand in Guyana. His "friend" at customs however was not working that day and the baby bottles were seized and he was charged a fine. He resolved the problem by returning the next day when his "friend" was working, paying a small charge and reclaiming his load. He then marked up the cost of the baby bottles to cover his additional expenses. Hence, except for some minor inconvenience he was none the worse off for the experience.

Fewer and fewer items are being sold abroad by traffickers from these countries because their economies produce little that is desired on extra-regional markets. Hence hucksters from these countries have developed into skilled shoppers, buyers and sellers of foreign goods, competing with traditional merchants, rather than marketers and distributors of domestically produced goods. Many items they import are considered non-essential by their own governments. Their work therefore is considered to have a detrimental impact on autonomous development for their countries. The women take no heed of these accusations however. Albeitha Boothe, a Jamaica domestic worker and part-time huckster, feels trading has given her her first break in life. Two years ago she was making J\$20 a day (under US\$4) washing and cleaning for wealthy people. She had no financial assistance from her husband and had to raise two children on her own. She remarks bitterly that "then the economy was not thinking of me. Now that I am making a little money, and working very hard to make it, they say I am doing something bad to the economy (Henry 1990, 5)." Now she remarks:

I am bringing in car parts from Panama. I have two or three regular customers. They give me the orders before I go. When I return I hand them the car parts and they write my cheque. I think the time has come for me to quit domestic work" (Henry 1990, 5).

Huckstering has become a matter of survival in these countries. These women are those who have been hit, left

and right, with economic hardship. Their current philosophy is "what the country cannot do for me, I will do for myself."

The hucksters from the Windward Islands operate within a slightly different scenario as is elaborated in chapter five. The primarily agricultural economies of these islands have generated informal sectors which focus largely on the marketing and sale of domestic agricultural produce, like dasheen, eddoes, cannias, and sweet potatoes, while the formal sector caters to the distribution of export crops, like bananas. While traders from these islands may also take on the role of informal commercial importer by purchasing goods abroad for resale at home, their trade is more linked to domestic production than that in Guyana, Jamaica, or Trinidad. While the Windwards are indeed feeling the impact of the economic crisis, they have not experienced the urban poverty and ghettoization which have resulted from the industrialization process experienced in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad. Hence there are not hoards of urban unemployed pouring into the informal economy. While the ICIs cater to domestic demand, the traders of agricultural produce cater to regional demand. The livelihood of these traders therefore is dependent on the continued prosperity of regional markets.

This type of huckstering has survived for years due to the existence within the region of enclave type economies

such as Barbados, Antigua, Guadeloupe, St. Martin, and at various periods of time the Cayman Islands, and Trinidad. Within these economies production is generally geared for export, foreign trade accounts for a large percentage of GNP, a large service sector exists, the formal sector is fairly buoyant in terms of labour absorption and hence the percentage of the population involved in the informal economy is small. Domestic agriculture tends to be of minor importance and hence these countries depend on external sources for basic foodstuffs.

Hucksters from the Windwards trade in these countries not only because they have a high demand for agriculture produce but also because they are excellent shopping centres for a two-way trade, many goods being available at duty free prices. Dominican hucksters are quick to point out that in Guadeloupe, "those French people will buy anything we hucksters bring to sell!" and that "Dominicans can buy anything they need in Guadeloupe." The demand offered within these enclave economies however can be precarious. As their economies fluctuate so does their demand for regional produce. Regional foodstuffs may be replaced by foreign imported foodstuffs in an effort to serve the tourist markets. Or, in periods of crisis, these countries may restrict the importation of food from other islands and instead encourage domestic agriculture. Hence, a stable trading situation for hucksters can never be guaranteed.

The Governments Take Notice

Throughout West Indian history since slavery, the formal sectors of the countries in the region and the governments which support them have kept a watchful eye on the activities within the informal economy. Hence during different periods it has been marginalized, regulated, or capitalized upon. During the current crisis West Indian governments are aware of several facts about the informal sector. On the one hand it absorbs a great number of unemployed persons, provides them with an income and therefore reduces the social welfare burden of the state. Furthermore, it provides the region with a number of services and products demanded by the populace which the formal sector cannot supply. And agricultural huckstering in particular earns the region's economies a significant income. On the other hand, formal merchants are finding it more difficult to compete with traffickers who have few overheads, vend from the pavement in front of their shops and usually sell merchandise at lower prices. They in turn have lobbied governments for increased restriction and regulation of the informal trade. Furthermore, traffickers and other informal sector workers rarely declare their income accurately and hence the government is unable to tax their full earnings. Also, traffickers' activities often border on the illegal, constantly stretching the limits of the law.

The governments' response to this situation has been not unlike their response in the past -- ambivalent and somewhat contradictory. Some concessions have been granted to traders such as vending sites, licenses, and warehouse facilities. While traders are still regarded with derision and as a nuisance, it is realized that in these times of crisis their activities are valuable. At the same time however governments are attempting to regulate and capitalize upon the trade. In Jamaica the government has imposed quotas on the volume of goods traders can bring into the country. It also sought to regulate the outflow of US currency by allowing the traders to buy their foreign exchange at the banks in accordance with the amount allocated in the quotas. The traders in turn would have to pay customs duties and taxes. The most recent measure introduced in Jamaica is the Business Enterprise Number (BENO) which is now required by traders to import and clear goods through customs. To get this number however traders require an Income Tax Number and a National Insurance Number, both of which enable the government to tax traders who had previously escaped taxation (Taylor 1988, 4-6). Similarly in Trinidad and Tobago the government has imposed an indirect taxation system in an attempt to capture some of the money earned in the informal sector.

Hence, as in the past, rather than developing and nurturing the informal sector, its resources are coopted and

channelled into the formal economy where they ultimately lose their dynamic. William Joslin, director of USAID, recently commented on the historic tension between the established business class and vendors, and the use of government authority by the business class to try to control the vendors:

If they (traders) have not been regulated out of existence in two hundred years, then it is time to ask if the right questions are being asked

How many other sectors are there where effort is spent trying to stop enterprise rather than encouraging it? Is it because there is no way to do so, or is it the well educated bias toward the formal sector preventing the imagination from seeing business opportunities? For surely, patterns that survive two hundred years of regulation have a powerful dynamic to them. (1989, 31)

While the essential nature of the informal sector in the West Indies has remained the same throughout history, the changes occurring within the sector have important implications for the future of Caribbean development. Whereas in the past, the informal trade was rooted in indigenous resources and sourced local products, today, there is an increasing number of traders who, like their economies, import more than they export. Consequently the trade is becoming increasingly divorced from the productive sectors in the region. In the past, the survival strategies of the people in the informal sector demonstrated creativity, ingenuity and sustainable development potential. While the contemporary informal trade reflects the creativity and ingenuity of the past, its sustainable

development potential for the region is questionable. The one glimmer of hope however, lies in the inter-island trade of agricultural produce. The trade's ability to survive amidst these changes in the regional economy are discussed in the following case study.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RIGOURS OF THE TRADE :

SURVIVAL AND SUCCESS AS INTER-ISLAND TRADERS FROM

ST. VINCENT AND DOMINICA

Each of the women who participated in this research was born and raised in either St. Vincent or Dominica. As well, all of them currently make their home and base their trading activities in these islands. Traders from St. Vincent and Dominica, along with Grenada and St. Lucia, have dominated the trade of agriculture produce in the Caribbean for decades. Throughout this period the trade has had considerable importance both for these islands and the people within them. This reality however has earned minor significance in the overall developmental thrust in these islands. Traders from St. Vincent and Dominica have struggled to survive within the cracks of a system that caters to foreign markets and foreign tastes. In the current period it appears that these cracks may be closing in on these traders.

The discussion in this chapter illustrates how development and crisis in St. Vincent and Dominica have limited the ability of domestic agriculture and the inter-island trade to thrive. It details the traders' hectic activity cycle which underscores the individualistic nature of the trade. Also highlighted are key problems these women

face, particularly their own vulnerability to crisis and change in the region. Lastly, the chapter discusses the effectiveness of traders' associations in addressing these issues. For personal details on the individual traders who are named in this and the following chapter, consult Appendix 1.

St. Vincent and Dominica:

The Region's Backyard Gardens

Both St. Vincent and Dominica have lush, rugged and fertile terrains. Flat expanses of land are rarely found amongst the hills and valleys of these islands and Dominica is said to have a river for every day of the year. Both historically and in the present this terrain has been an influential factor in the development of these islands' economies and the inter-island trade.

The fertile soil on both islands has the capacity to sustain a wide variety of crops. The region's first breadfruit tree was in fact transplanted from the South Pacific to St. Vincent by Captain Bligh centuries ago and it remains standing to this day. Both islands have the potential to be self-sufficient in food and to export surplus produce to less fertile countries in the region. The inter-island trade of local products is not a twentieth century phenomenon in St. Vincent and Dominica. Prior to conquest and settlement of the islands by the Europeans, the native Callina (Carib) people traded locally grown tobacco,

corn, beans, cassava, tannia, and arrowroot with neighbouring territories (Weiller, Clavel & Troalen 1988, 34). In Dominica the early French settlers in the late seventeenth century maintained this system of small estates and mixed crop cultivation growing a variety of crops including coffee, cocoa, cotton, and tobacco (Honeychurch 1984, 390).

Sugar is one crop which is ill-suited to the harsh terrain and often volatile weather conditions in these islands. Neither St. Vincent or Dominica maintains a sugar industry today. However, as Williams (1970) notes, when these islands were ceded to Britain in 1763, the plantocracy was determined to "serve their one god" (sugar), and hence cane was grown wherever flat land was available and slave labour was imported to sustain the industry (134). Before the end of the eighteenth century sugar had become the main export crop in both islands (Rubenstein 1977, 22; ECLAC 1985, 22). Success was shortlived however as West Indian sugar was outcompeted on world markets. In Dominica low returns made planters unable to use their slaves productively and affordably and hence between 1808 and 1821 many sold and exported their slaves to other islands (ECLAC 1985).

Given the limited amount of landspace suitable for cane cultivation, the slaves had substantial provision grounds on which to cultivate a variety of crops for their Sunday

markets. Mrs. Carmichael, a plantation owner in St. Vincent in the early nineteenth century, noted the scope and variety of goods produced and sold by slaves. She observed that many slaves raised chickens, ducks, pigs and goats; caught fish; made charcoal; and processed and sold farine, laundry and arrowroot starch (1969, 177-8). Unlike the situation in other islands, the terrain in St. Vincent and Dominica was extremely conducive to the establishment of an independent peasantry at the time of emancipation. An abundance of cheap land was available and hence few ex-slaves returned to the plantations as wage-labourers. Many communal style African villages were established throughout both islands. Even today St. Vincent and Dominica are agriculturally-based economies with the majority of farms, being of four hectares or less and farmers growing a variety of crops including eddoes, dasheens, tannias, yams, sweet potatoes, mangoes, flowers, spice, and citrus (Mintz 1971, 144; Caribbean Handbook 1989, 116). It is these small farmers and their diversified output on whom hucksters and traffickers from these islands have relied for decades.

The reality however, is hardly as organic and self-reliant as it has the potential to be. With import liberalization and the increasing export orientation of these economies, both St. Vincent and Dominica have become net importers of food (Sunshine 1985, ECLAC 1985, 134). St. Vincent and Grenadines presently imports the three staple

foods of the poor -- flour, rice and sugar (Rubenstein 1987, 50), while Dominica imports EC\$50 million of meat and chicken a year (McAfee 1990, 39). Second, while the majority of islands' agricultural population consists of small farmers, equality in land distribution is poor. Much of the land is concentrated in large estates. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 1973, 37 farms of more than 20 hectares occupied 55.6 of cultivatable land while 87.5 percent of farms occupied 23.5% of the cultivatable land. In 1988 one farm occupied more than 2000 hectares, more than 14.5% of cultivatable land (Weiller et al 1988, 48). In Dominica large amounts of land are government owned and controlled including large estates. Large estates occupy one half of all cultivatable land (Caribbean Handbook 1989, 116). This land could be the focus of a national plan for a more self-sufficient agricultural strategy. Instead however, in accordance with US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank recommendations, the land was offered for sale to the higher bidder. As a result many cooperatives and small farmers were displaced (McAfee 1990, 39). These ironies are rooted in the historical pattern of development of both islands.

The Historical Legacy of Export Dependency

As in other Caribbean countries, the establishment of the plantation economy in St. Vincent and Dominica laid the basis for the monocrop export dependency that has pervaded

the economies of the region for centuries. Despite the subsistence survival strategies of the peasants, the formal sectors in these islands remained tied to export production and hence when the sugar industry collapsed alternative export crops were sought. Over the years both countries have experienced a series of booms and busts over different export crops. A predicament for the peasants in St. Vincent and Dominica was that there was very little currency circulating in these economies which prevented the people from investing in and developing their lands. Migration was sought as a solution for many to gain this desired cash. Similarly as markets and demand for new export crops emerged, many cultivators, eager for cash, began producing for extra-regional export. As a result, more and more small farmers became involved in monocrop production and hence vulnerable to the vagaries in world trade.

The Banana Boom

Since sugar, no crop has so profoundly affected the political economies of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica as bananas. In both countries bananas became the primary export crop in the 1950s (Spinelli 1979, 376; Rubenstein 1987, 48). In St. Vincent in the 1960s peasant farmers and their families were producing 80% of the banana crop (Mintz 1985, 144). By the late 1970s nearly one-fifth of all arable land was devoted to banana cultivation. Approximately 70% of this land was cultivated by peasants

(Rubenstein 1987, 48). Rubenstein estimates that in 1984 bananas accounted for 38% of all primary agricultural export earnings (1987 43), while Sunshine estimates that the crop accounted for over 60% of agricultural earnings in 1985 (1985, 138). There are presently 11,000 registered banana growers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In 1988 the industry earned \$85 million with the export of 63,000 tons of bananas (Gonzales 1989, 2). The industry is clearly pivotal to the domestic economy as the main employer of labour, the major source of foreign exchange and the principal user of arable lands.

Similarly, in Dominica before 1950 land tenure was characterized by a few large estates, many small farms and some Crown land. By the end of the 1940s however, the demand for land led to the eviction of a large number of tenants established on large estates while the government tried to distribute plots to farmers and would-be farmers. While the distribution of land did not really change, the allocation of labour shifted in favour of banana production. While earlier in the century many small farmers were involved in the production of food for the domestic and regional markets, this changed during the banana years as many small farmers entered the banana industry because of the regularity of cash inflows (ECLAC 1985, 132). As a result banana production increased five times in volume between 1950 and 1956 and the volume of production rose from

17 325 tons to 57 677 tons between 1957 and 1969 (ECLAC 1985, 130-1). Smallholders had more money than they ever had. In the sixties bananas represented almost 80% of the island's whole export trade (Bellon 1988, 14). Even in 1987 bananas from Dominica amounted to 71% of the island's gross domestic export earnings (Sunshine 1990, 38).

There is a grim underside to this apparently booming industry however. As discussed in Chapter three, during the post war period, many of the Caribbean countries, like St. Vincent and Dominica, were open to foreign capital and investment to develop their economies. Since 1964 Geest Industries, a Dutch owned transnational which exports to the UK, has monopolized the banana industry in the Windward islands (Spinelli 1979, 376; Barry, Wood & Preusch 1984, 286). Geest controls the purchasing, shipping, distribution and sale of bananas for the region (Thomas 1988, 130). Presently, farmers have no choice but to accept Geest's prices which fluctuate depending on demand in Britain and on Geest's charges for a variety of services like freight, handling, and ripening. Furthermore, farmers are subject to international currency fluctuations which are beyond their control. Presently farmers receive about one tenth of what the bananas sell for in the British grocery stores. One half of the population of Dominica depends on the income from bananas to survive and most of these bananas are grown on holdings of less than two hectares (Sunshine 1988, 162).

Regional governments have little bargaining power in this relationship given that they themselves do not have the resources to distribute and market their own crops.

In return for its services Geest offers the Windward islands protected UK markets for their crop (Sunshine 1985, 138; Thomas 1988, 130; Spinelli 1979, 376). Presently tariffs and non-tariff barriers are placed on bananas entering the UK market from other banana producing countries like those in Central America (Gonsalves 1989, 5).

The islands' banana industries have survived thus far on the basis of their protected preferential market access. However, the imminent concern for the industry is the 1992 Single Europe Act which will facilitate a completely free circulation of goods and services between and among the member-states of the European Economic Community (EEC), including the UK, the sole buyer of the Windward Islands' bananas (Gonsalves 1989, 1). For St. Vincent and Dominica this Act essentially means that the countries' preferential access ends and these islands' bananas will have to compete with better quality and cheaper bananas from Central America and other areas. Banana producing countries in Central America generally have higher yields per hectare and lower labour costs thus making their bananas more competitive on the open market than those from the Windward islands (Gonsalves 1989, 1; McAfee 1990, 35). Furthermore, local producers have little control over the industry not having

developed other facets of trade and industry related to the production and exportation of bananas (Gonsalves 1989, 8). Lastly, Geest Industries has become a diversified conglomerate and can pull out of the region at any time (Sunshine 1988, 163). These factors signal potential doom for the banana industry in St. Vincent and Dominica and consequent political, social and economic havoc in the countries as the livelihood of thousands would be endangered. The imminent bust could be more devastating to the domestic economies of these countries than previous declines in export crops given the high dependence on monocrop agriculture the banana boom has caused.

The Impact on Domestic Agriculture
and the Inter-Island Trade

With a history of dependence on export agriculture, monocrop agriculture and the vagaries of world markets, it is ironic that countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica would not have taken sufficient measures to shield and protect the economy and its people from turbulence. The historical experience of repeated boom and bust in the sugar, cocoa, coffee, citrus, arrowroot and cotton industries seems to have been written off as mere coincidence and have not been heeded as prophetic lessons for the banana industry. As a result domestic agriculture has never been regarded and treated with the development potential it deserves.

While many small farmers in St. Vincent are engaged in banana production for the export market, bananas are not the only crop grown by small farmers. Amongst the peasantry export crops have always been grown alongside food for domestic consumption. This includes products such as eddoes, dasheens, tannias, yams, and sweet potatoes, mangoes, coconuts, and ginger. Since the time of the second World War, supplying the needs of the Trinidad and Tobago market had led to the development of the cultivation of food crops by small farmers. "In 1935, 9150 sweet potato sacks were exported to Trinidad, in 1948 this figure was 19113 sacks and in 1956 47405 sacks (Weiller et al. 1988, 47). This trend continues today. It is predominantly women who both farm and market these crops (CARTRA 1988, 13; Chase 1988, 31-2). In 1981 the value on non-banana agricultural exports from St. Vincent was 28.3% (Mintz 1985, 143), suggesting that there is significant growth potential in this area.

Outside of the banana industry, however, agriculture has not received considerable attention or respect in St. Vincent. On the whole it remains mired in low productivity, technological inefficiency and monoculture (Sunshine 1985, 138). While agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy there is little support for the peasant farmer. St. Vincent's 1979-80 budget allocated only 3% of public funds to this sector. Extension services are poor, research

equipment is limited and credit for farmers is scarce (Rubenstein 1987, 51). As Sunshine (1985) observes, in 1981 banks made only 6.8% of their loans to the agricultural sector. It was easier to get a loan to buy a car (138).

Similarly in Dominica, while resources, land and capital were allocated to the banana export industry they were drained from domestic agriculture. The neglect of domestic agriculture plagued the sector with infrastructural and marketing constraints and hence only enhanced the attractiveness of the marketing arrangements which facilitated the spread of bananas (ECLAC 1985, 132). This trend had the effect of virtually halting the production of food crops for local and regional markets. As more land was diverted to banana production there was less pasture land available for farm families to raise livestock for local sale or their own consumption (McAfee 1990, 38). Between 1949 and 1961 there was also a reduction in number of hectares for local fruit and vegetables from 2500 to 1650 hectares (ECLAC 1984, 134). As a result the country's food import bill has soared over the years. In 1976 the food import bill totalled EC\$16.2 million or 33% of the total import bill. By 1980 Dominica had become a net importer of food and earnings from the banana industry have been insufficient to purchase this food (ECLAC 1985, 134). The shelves of any grocery store in Dominica are most certainly to be found lined with more foreign products than local,

underscoring the degree of food imports as well as the foreign taste habits of the Dominican people.

While there has been a recent push by the World Bank and USAID for agricultural diversification in the region, the focus of this diversification remains on extra-regional exports. Two projects in the region, AID's High-Impact Agricultural Marketing and Diversification Project (HIAMP) and the West Indies Tropical Produce Project (Tro-Pro) are both intended to encourage "exotic" fruit and vegetable exports to "specialized market niches" in the United States (McAfee 1990, 38). These attempts however embody the same problems that have made the banana industry and other export crop industries risky. Furthermore, the economies remain vulnerable, and small farmers are not encouraged to grow their own food, or process, package and market agricultural produce for regional needs.

The shift away from domestic agriculture and towards other potential growth sectors over the last few decades has affected the nature of trafficking from the islands. By the end of the 1970s the regional trade in agricultural products by national marketing boards and private distributors essentially collapsed for several reasons. First, problems in regional cooperation occurred with the Agricultural Marketing Protocol (AMP) being abolished in 1983 and trade liberalization benefitting more developed regional economies like Trinidad and Jamaica rather than smaller agricultural

economies. Second, the economic crisis of the seventies and eighties created unstable conditions for primary exporting countries. Third, agrarian production decreased as higher wages came to be offered in the extractive, industrial and tourist sectors of Caribbean economies. Together with the general disdain for agriculture this led to a decrease in the total amount of land under cultivation and the movement of populations away from farming areas. Similarly, the division of land holding by inheritance and the parcelling of lands have resulted in inefficient small-scale farming and limited land productivity. Fourth, international competition has increased whereby larger international trading companies are dominating the trade in agricultural crops. Last, countries in the region are emphasizing export crops such as bananas, coconuts, mangoes, arrowroot, to the detriment of small farmer cultivated foodstuffs like ground provision, fruits, and vegetables (Lagro 1990, 4-6).

More recently, as part of the structural adjustment package, the emphasis has been placed on export manufacturing in several countries. The result however has been a further neglect and consequent decline in the domestic agriculture and food self-reliance.

As a result, the task of providing the region with local staples and ensuring the survival of small traditional crop farmers has been taken over by the hucksters. These women are willing to take the risks which participants in

the formal sector are not prepared to take. Presently inter-island hucksters dominate the intra-regional trade in agricultural produce. Traffickers from Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica are estimated to have an 80-90% share in the trade. As well, the inter-island traders have ensured the survival of traditional crop farmers who are marginalized by the "modernizing" agricultural sector. Most traffickers rely on a regular group of farmers to supply their produce. Likewise, for many small farmers, hucksters are their primary buyers. Hence the interdependent relationship established between the higgler and the small-scale cultivator during the post-emancipation period continues to play a vital role in ensuring the survival of both parties.

This survival is presently in a precarious state however. As human, financial and technical resources are directed towards export agriculture more and more small farmers are leaving local crop production for banana production. This has created a situation of crop shortages for hucksters which in turn creates competitive relations amongst them. For many women informal commercial importing is a more lucrative option. Similarly, as market conditions change so does the profitability of the trade. Import restriction on islands such as Barbados and Guadeloupe and currency devaluations in Trinidad have decreased the trader's profit margin. Consequently, even though hucksters

continue to dominate the trade, there has been an overall drop in the number of traders of agricultural produce and the amount of goods traded since the early 1980's (Lagro 1990, 12-13).

The Traffickers of St. Vincent

The "traffickers" of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, like the traders from all the Windward Islands, are principally traders in agricultural produce and traditionally always have been. This tradition is steeped in the agrarian nature of the economy as a whole. While Vincentian traders have trafficked a wide array of products over the years, including livestock and apparently marijuana and whisky, presently the trade mainly involves ground provisions such as eddoes, tannias, sweet potatoes, dasheens and yams. These crops account for most of the intra-regional exports (Lagro 1988, 3). Also traded are copra (dry coconut), bananas (usually seconds rejected by Geest), plaintains and mangoes. As table 2 below indicates, production of most of these agricultural commodities increased substantially in St. Vincent between 1980 and 1985. The overwhelming majority of this produce was marketed regionally by traffickers. While intra-regional trade is also conducted by the marketing corporations of governments, private organizations and individual exporters, the traffickers' share of the inter-island trade is estimated to be between 80 and 90% (ECLAC 1987, 6).

Table 2: Estimated Production of Selected Commodities, 1981-1985, St. Vincent (Unit=metric tons)

Commodity	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Sweet Potatoes	1,369	1,450	1,084	2,317	8,529
Yams	696	929	1,251	3,773	3,262
Tannias	1,743	2,067	2,959	6,512	9,354
Eddoes, Dasheen	4,322	5,443	8,428	16,068	25,376
Bananas	33,221	31,752	34,921	33,556	41,922
Plantains	5,080	1,988	1,473	3,099	4,222
Mangoes	1,731	2,727	2,273	2,273	2,273
Limes	159	159	159	159	159
Oranges	212	212	212	212	212
Grapefruit	121	121	121	121	121
Avocados	159	219	219	316	316
Coconuts	9,924	415	9,475	10,564	7,940

Source: Lagro 1988, 4.

Up until the past few years the bulk of the traffickers' trade was destined for the Trinidad market. Exports to Trinidad between 1983 and 1985 averaged between 300 and 400 tons per week, with an annual value of approximately EC\$50 million (Joseph & La Gra 1990, 9). Traffickers also operated, though to a lesser extent, in Barbados, St. Martin and Antigua. The Vincentian trafficking population at that time numbered approximately 462 (Lagro 1988, 6). This number includes both full time and part time traffickers as well as those (73%) who ship produce from St. Vincent and the Grenadines and then themselves collect it in the ports of dispatch, and those (27%) who use agents to collect and market their produce overseas (Lagro 1988, 10).

The Dominican Hucksters

Like the Vincentians, Dominican hucksters are principally traders of agricultural produce such as ground provisions, plaintains, citrus, bananas, coconuts, and mangoes. They are also traders of spice and flowers, notably anthurium lilies.

Presently Guadeloupe is the most important market for their goods though many traders also sell in Antigua, St. Martin, St. Kitts and Nevis, Martinique and Barbados. According to Hucksters' Association Executive Secretary, Cecil Joseph, the Guadeloupe market continues to be steady since the number of people involved in agriculture in the French department decreases every year thereby guaranteeing demand for Dominican produce. The Guadeloupe market has been particularly strong recently due to the destruction, caused by hurricane Hugo, of much of Guadeloupe's domestic crops. As a result the demand for bananas and plantains has soared. It is estimated that the trade earns Dominica upwards of EC\$3 million a year (Homiak 1986, 31). The annual trade report of Antigua and Barbuda indicates that between 1981 and 1984 the amount of imports from Dominica rose from EC\$1 169 300 in 1981 to EC\$1 380 600 in 1984 (Lagro 1990, 8).

The number of hucksters seems to be declining over the last few years. In 1984 there were 1378 licensed hucksters. This number dropped to 467 in 1986 (Lagro 1990, 13). Having

a license however does not mean that a trader is active. Furthermore four members of one family may have trading licenses though only one member hucksters on a regular basis. Similarly, not all traders possess a licence. In 1985 the DHA and the Dominican government agreed that no licences were to be issued unless a Training Programme of four hours duration was attended by the applicant. Shipping bills are a more accurate assessor of the numbers of active traders. Based on shipping bills, Lagro finds that there were 119 active traders in 1989 (1990, 13). Reasons for the decline in active traders could vary from the general economic recession in the region as a whole, to the banana boom of recent years on which many Dominicans have capitalized, to the fact that many long time traders have made their money and therefore travel less frequently, to the noticeable increase even in Dominica of the informal commercial importer. Approximately 45% of Dominican hucksters also engage in the reverse or two-way trade buying mostly onions, potatoes, and red beans from Guadeloupe, and clothing, cosmetics, ornaments and footwear from St. Martin. Some traders have opened up small shops from which they sell their merchandise purchased abroad. Most hucksters import between EC\$267 and EC\$4,762 on a trading trip (Lagro 1990, 43).

Figure 1
THE TRADERS ACTIVITY CYCLE

The Traders' Activity Cycle

Traffickers and hucksters are total traders who individually carry out all the functions necessary to effect an export business. The activities of the cycle are essentially the same for traders from both St. Vincent and Dominica though cycle lengths and market conditions may differ (see Figure 1). The activity cycle is generally one week long for Vincentians with activity initiated on Saturdays and concluded on Fridays. For Dominicans trading in Guadeloupe the activity cycle also lasts a week, while for those trading in St. Martin and Antigua the cycle has a two week duration. Corinne briefly describes her weekly trading cycle to Guadeloupe:

Well Sunday, I leavin' my home; I go into the country. I buying my stuff, stuff like spice, nutmeg, dasheen and anything that I get on the way that will sell, coconuts, anything. I buy and I go back to Roseau. The same Sunday I pack it in boxes and bags and sometimes I put my things on the boat around ten o'clock. After ten I put it on board, I pay my load and then I back home. Sometimes I even have to cook when I reach home after ten to eleven if I hungry ... I eat I relax and then I go to bed. But I sleep one eye's open one eye's closed because I have to wake up Monday early morning around five o'clock. Sometimes if there are dirty things I have to wash them. If my clothes don't iron I have to iron my clothes around five to six o'clock. Half past six I have to leave my home to reach the airport or the boat -- always hustling. And then I hustle to pay the passage again, sometimes I meet a lot of people there and I late. I always have to hustle around.

After, when we reach on the boat, I relax, take the boat from the port to Guadeloupe two hours... I still have to hustle to take a taxi. What little I buy in the market [in Roseau] I have to go and sell it on the Guadeloupe market. And then after twelve, one, two, three o'clock I have to go and clear my load and I

have to go to a man Max where they will take off the load.

At five o'clock we clear the load and I have to look for a taxi to bring my load up. I lift it up whether it is heavy or not. Sometimes I reach home where I residing around six o'clock and then I have to cook. If I don't cook I go in the restaurant. I eat, I drink, I relax, I bathe I still have to sleep one eye open, one eye closed because you have to get up early around three oclock, half past three . At that hour I have to lift up the bags and boxes myself. Then I reach on the market around half past three or four and fix up just to get a space. On my market you don't sell at four o'clock but to get a space you have to go early and fix up your space and then you can relax. When you have seven o'clock or eight o'clock, well, people are always coming and buying.

It satisfies me that I am always making a money. So I have to hustle, try to sell these things from Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Friday is the last day so I sell the rest and I make my shopping and I still have to hustle again and bring the things that don't sell to my home. Then I have to hustle, bathe my self, put on my clothes, take a taxi again to go on the boat, buy my stuff like peanuts, potatoes, onions, garlic, cloves, put in on a transport and hustle to put everyting on board and the boat men don't touch nothing, you alone have to do it.... When you reach home at eight o'clock you still have to hustle yourself, claim customs, put it on your transport or hire a transport. You get to your home around ten oclock. I still have to sleep one eye's open one eye's closed because the next day, it is Saturday and I have to go and sell those things I bring from Guadeloupe to make a living.

This inter-island trade is quite unlike formal sector exporting of agricultural produce. Hucksters do not have separate individuals or departments handling the purchasing, packing, transporting, and marketing of their produce, nor do they hire bookkeepers, customs brokers or accountants to manage their business. Traders do everthing themselves. They export without the benefits of sophisticated packaging materials, preservatives, and refrigeration units.

Furthermore there are no written contracts or formal licensing arrangements between traders and their supplies, shippers, or buyers. Their trade has survived on informal verbal agreements.

To understand fully the complexity and scope of these women's activities one must accompany them through each of the steps of their cycle, which I attempted to do. Very quickly one realizes the amount of stamina required to be an inter-island trader.

Activity 1: Making Arrangements for the Trip

For each cycle, traders have to make arrangements with farmers who supply the produce, drivers and carriers who assist in transporting the goods to port and family members who care for their home and children while they are away. These relationships are not formal or contractual and hence must be nurtured over time to ensure reliability. Often each of these relationships involves a financial transaction unless the trader grows her own produce, owns her own vehicle and can rely on unpaid family support for transport and childcare needs.

Activity 2: Purchasing and Collecting the Produce

For these traders much of the weekend is spent travelling about the countryside purchasing and collecting their produce from their suppliers. Although several traders are farmers themselves or have a partner who farms and supplies them, they still need to purchase additional

produce to meet the market demand. Traders may deal with anywhere between three and ten small farmers, and often must travel from one end of the island to the next to collect from them all. While many farmers will leave the produce by the roadside for their hucksters this is not always the case and often the women take responsibility for this heavy lifting. Under such circumstances it is important to have adequate transportation to collect the goods. A van or pick-up truck is often one of the first investments a trader will make. For those traders without vehicles, transport must be rented, adding to the trader's overhead costs.

In the competitive world of huckstering a vehicle can make all the difference to a trader's efficiency and success. On Saturday mornings at the Dominica Hucksters' Association, I would watch as many traders zoomed up to the warehouse in their pick-up trucks, purchased two or three dozen cartons and quickly drove off into the country to collect their produce, having spent only a few minutes at the Association. At the same time I would see newer traders, who did not own their own vehicles, walking with two of their children towards the DHA after having disembarked the bus by the main road. They would purchase as many cartons as the three of them could carry (perhaps six) and return to catch another bus home. Without vehicles, new traders spend considerably more time and money

preparing their goods and often do not have the capacity to export large quantities at a time.

Each huckster on average trades four to six products. Produce varies with seasonality, demand, import restrictions and availability. Traders may ship anywhere from 500 to 7000 kilograms of produce at a time (ECLAC, 1988: 14).

Activity 3: Sorting, Cleaning and Packaging of
Goods for Shipmen.

These activities often are carried out at the trader's home and/or at the port before goods are loaded for shipment. On Sundays afternoons it is not uncommon to find the pavement in front of a huckster's home obstructed with cartons waiting to be packed. Similarly, on Monday mornings one sees Vincentian traffickers busily cleaning and sorting mangoes so that they will appear as perfect as possible for the finicky Barbados market. Again, these activities are carried out by the individual trader, perhaps with assistance from family members.

Over the years traders have sought to package their goods as cheaply as possible. Hence bags, boxes, sacks, and crates have been used and reused. Often freight charges are not standardized and traders pay by the sack or box. Consequently in attempt to save money many overstuff containers which often leads to spoilage.

3

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

Activity 4: Transporting the Produce to Port

If traders have their own transport facilities this procedure becomes relatively easy excepting the fact that the cartons and sacks of produce are extremely heavy making loading and unloading strenuous tasks. Most traders however do not have their own transport and hence arrangements must be made with middlepersons to ensure the produce arrives at the port on schedule. On Monday mornings at the Kingstown Port in St. Vincent traders wait in warehouses and along the roadside for trucks to come rumbling in with their produce.

Activity 5: Documentation

Because traders are involved in the export of perishable goods across national boundaries there are numerous documentation procedures that they must undertake before shipping. Documents to be obtained and paid for by traders include shipping bills, invoices, CARICOM certificates, and often visas. Procedures for obtaining these documents can be lengthy and involve the checking by government officials such as customs and phytosanitary officers. In St. Vincent on Mondays traffickers hustle about trying to obtain their necessary documents inbetween packing and loading their produce.

Activities 6,7 & 8: Loading and Transporting
the Produce and Travelling Overseas

After documentation procedures have been completed and freight charges paid, the produce is ready for loading onto the vessels. Here again traders must pay helpers to transport their goods on wooden trolleys to the vessels. In Kingstown loading occurs on Monday afternoons and in Roseau and Portsmouth on Sunday and Saturday nights respectively.

Presently few traders accompany their cargo on the vessel to their trading destinations though the practice still persists in Dominica to some extent. One of the boats travelling regularly to Dominica is in fact owned and operated by the husband of a huckster. Most hucksters travel by air or on the Caribbean Express -- a high speed catamaran service operated out of Martinique. Traders from St. Vincent are not permitted to travel to Trinidad by boat due to government regulations. Most therefore travel by air. Cargo vessels travelling to Barbados often have insufficient room for cargo let alone passengers. Consequently, many traffickers are forced to carry some of their produce on the plane with them as extra baggage. Traders who sell through agents do not travel to the selling country.

Activities 9 & 10: Off-loading and
Transporting the Produce to the Market

At the port of entry the trader assumes the role of importer. As the consignee of the goods, traders must meet the necessary payment and legal obligations before they can off-load. These procedures often require the services of brokers and can take as much as half a day for each trader to complete.

Unloading is a long and slow process. When I travelled to Guadeloupe with the Dominican hucksters, soon after disembarking from our passenger boat we immediately walked to the other side of the port to where the cargo vessels had docked. Hucksters often have to wait for hours as the boats slowly unload and stack produce in individual piles on the wharf. Customs officials wait discreetly in a car parked closeby, watching carefully to see if any traders are carrying restricted items. At the time, foreign plantains were prohibited entry into Guadeloupe in order to protect local growers and encourage domestic production. Plantains however remained scarce and highly in demand on the island. Dominican hucksters, well aware of this fact, found ways to smuggle plantains into Guadeloupe.

Veteran traders, like Corinne, realize that it may be hours before their load is ready for transport to the market and hence they carry small amounts of produce and spice with them on board the Caribbean Express which they can sell

retail from the time they arrive in Guadeloupe until their load is ready.

In Trinidad, Wednesdays are a hub of activity on the CARICOM jetty with boats unloading from St. Vincent, Grenada and Tobago, young men milling about seeking casual work, truck drivers waiting to transport produce to the market, and vendors selling sno-cones, soft drinks and snacks. From the wharf traders hire trucks to transport goods to the market. These arrangements are usually made in advance by the traders. Occasionally, traders will rent vehicles and transport the goods themselves.

Activities 11, 12 & 13: Selling the Produce,

Night Storage, Overnighting by the Trader

Traders begin selling as soon as they leave the port with their produce. Markets are usually located close by. Most Vincentian traders sell wholesale in Trinidad and some sell to restaurants and supermarkets in Barbados. Dominicans sell wholesale in St. Martin and Antigua and both wholesale and retail in Guadeloupe. Vincentians traffickers in Trinidad sell Wednesday afternoons and Thursday if necessary. Dominicans in Guadeloupe sell Monday evening, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday if necessary.

Most traders have verbal agreements with their wholesalers and hence purchase their produce according to the buyers' supply needs. Again, because these relationships are not formalized, traders are not guaranteed

sales. Corinne's daughter, Joyce, who is also a huckster has an interesting relationship with her wholesaler, a young French West Indian man. While their relationship seems to have both a personal and professional element to it, the personal does not ensure the security of the professional. When I accompanied Joyce to Guadeloupe she had purchased extra amounts of limes and plantains at the request of her wholesaler. When we arrived, however, her wholesaler suddenly took ill and hence never came to collect his produce. Consequently Joyce was left to sell the limes and plantains herself.

In the Trinidad and Guadeloupe markets there are no facilities available to traders to store their goods overnight. Vincentian traffickers attempt to sell off quickly Wednesday afternoons, lowering the price of their goods if necessary. Dominicans cover their goods with tarpaulins and leave them unattended overnight. However there are usually a few hucksters who sleep in the market amongst their produce. By doing this they are not only protecting their produce from theft but also saving money on accomodation and ensuring early sales in the morning.

Most traders however do not sleep in the market. There was a diversity of accomodation arrangements amongst the traders I spoke with. Bernice, a Vincentian trafficker, had a male partner living in Trinidad and stayed with him when she travelled there. Nellie and Carol from St. Vincent

share accomodation in a guesthouse when they go to St. Martin. Yvonne from Dominica sleeps on her husband's boat. Several of the traders stay with relatives and many others rent apartments together. I was somewhat surprised by the fact that Corinne, her daughter and her son, all who sell in Guadeloupe, do not share accomodation. Her son sleeps on one of the boats, her daughter stays with a friend and Corinne rents an old wooden shack in an urban slum area of Point a Pitre. This shack, which lacks toilet facilities, was a stark contrast to Corinne's comfortable home in Dominica.

Activity 14: Securing Foreign Exchange for the Trip Home

After their goods are sold traders convert their currency. In Trinidad this is a two-part transaction, since the Central Bank distinguished between the so-called CIF value (cost of goods, insurance and freight) and the profit value. Processing time for foreign exchange approval for profits ranges anywhere between one and eight weeks (Lagro 1988, 18). This often affects the trader's credit rating with farmers and middlepersons at home because prompt repayment cannot be guaranteed. To ameliorate this situation to some extent, many traders inflate their CIF figures when exporting to Trinidad so that they can leave the country with more money.

In Guadeloupe, hucksters are paid in French francs. On Fridays traders go to one of many money changers in Point a

Pitre and convert their francs to US dollars. Similarly in St. Martin traders are paid in French francs, Dutch guilders and US dollars.

Activities 15, 16, 17 & 18: Purchasing Commodities for
Resale at Home and the Return Trip

Traders of agricultural produce do not sell imported goods at home to the same extent or in the same volume as ICIs. When reverse trading does occur however, the commodities dealt in are usually determined by the shortages prevalent at home. Corinne two way trades on a regular basis. She imports onions, garlic, potatoes, cloves, soaps, macaroni, and occasionally wine. I used to visit while she was selling these items in the Roseau market on Saturday mornings. By the time I arrived at 7:30 am, all her potatoes would be sold. Traders from the Windward islands sometimes purchase hardware, bathroom fixtures, clothing, building materials and other supplies in Trinidad, Guadeloupe and St. Martin for personal use or resale. Many of the women trading in St. Martin purchase commodities duty free for sale at home. Two of Dominica's most successful hucksters operate large boutiques in Roseau and Portsmouth in which they sell many items purchased abroad. Nellie from St. Vincent has a large stall in the Kingstown central market from which she sells many foodstuffs purchased in St. Martin. Occasionally she imports clothing which she sells on the roadside in Kingstown.

Many traders purchase items abroad for personal use at the request of friends and family. When I was in Guadeloupe, Barbara and her daughter Deidre, both Dominican hucksters, were shopping for a washing machine. The homes of Dominican hucksters are filled with consumer items purchased in Guadeloupe, including items such as bathroom tiles and toilet bowls.

In preparation for the return trip home, traders return their empty and salvageable boxes and sacks along with their purchased items to the cargo vessel prior to its departure. These items must all be claimed when the trader returns home. Dominicans who travel by Caribbean Express carry many of their purchases with them. This however leads to a mad rush for immigration and customs as soon as the boat docks in Roseau on Friday night. Clearing the goods with customs can take some time.

Upon arriving in the home territory traders must have arrangements for the transportation of themselves and their goods home. Often spouses or children will be waiting at the airport or portside to take their often exhausted family member home.

Problems

The trade in agricultural produce is fraught with difficulties. Many of the problems stem from the fact that the women undertake their activities amidst difficult conditions with little assistance, support, or regulation.

The traders of St. Vincent and Dominica are well aware of the problems they encounter on a regular basis and have their own ideas as to their solution. Many hucksters have high overhead costs such as airfare, and freight charges and their income from the trade is not always sufficient to cover these costs and provide a sufficient profit. Traders would like to see lower costs on freight, particularly when goods are packaged properly, and discounted airfares.

Second, most hucksters deal in the same products and sell in the same markets. Consequently they are highly dependent on the demand of the importing country which could change at any time and must operate amongst highly competitive conditions. Competition in turn creates tension amongst traders as they try to outsell each other. Dominican traders to St. Martin are particularly aware of this situation and have their own ideas about curbing it. They suggest that a pension should be established for older traders to prevent markets from being flooded with sellers. They are also in favour of export quotas and a rotational system whereby traders would not travel every week. Third, they suggest that the number of boats travelling to St. Martin be reduced (Lagro & Plotkin 1990, 52).

A third problem traders face is the spoilage or loss of their produce. Post harvest losses are estimated between 25 and 50 percent. Many hucksters lose their goods because of cost saving or improper packaging materials, and exposure to

harsh elements. Many traders continue to use sacks to pack and ship their good instead of crates and boxes. When cartons are used they are often over packed with produce resulting in spoilage. On Mondays at the wharf in St. Vincent and on Sundays at the Roseau port in Dominica traders watch carefully as their goods are loaded on the boats. Most traders arrive with their load as late as possible to ensure that their goods are loaded on top, and therefore not squashed by the sacks and cartons of others. Also, during transport, if sea conditions are rough boat crew may dump goods into the water to ease the strain on the boat.

In Dominica by the third or fourth day in the market it is a common sight to see fruit rotting in the sun. In Trinidad, Vincentian traffickers are not given market space or selling tables. Instead they must sell their goods on the pavement where they are exposed to sun and rain. Furthermore hucksters are not insured for this spoilage or loss and therefore must absorb their losses. In response to these conditions traders would like to see improved facilities, such as cold storage, on boats, better handling of produce by boat crews, some sort of financial compensation when goods are dumped and more sheltered areas in markets to protect produce from sun and rain damage.

Theft is also a problem experienced by hucksters, particularly since their goods are often left unattended in

the market areas at night. To safeguard against theft many Dominica hucksters will sleep amongst their produce in the market, throwing down a cardboard box and tarpaulin as a bed. They are then protected from theft, save money on accomodation, and are the first to make sales in the morning when customers arrive.

I was surprised to learn that Esther, a young huckster from Dominica, regularly slept in the market, despite the fact that she had numerous relatives with whom she could stay in Guadeloupe. During the week I spent with the hucksters in Guadeloupe, Esther was feeling quite ill. Rather than leaving her produce for others to sell and resting at her relative's home she stayed in the market, taking frequent naps under cardboard boxes. Traders from both islands would like to see increased security at the marketplace.

Fifth, relations are often tense amongst hucksters or between hucksters and the individuals they must deal with on a regular basis like farmers, drivers, and customs officers. This is often due to tenuous credit relations and in the case of "officials" the general social stigma attached to the traders and the lack of streamlined and standardized documentation procedures. Traders would like their customers to pay in cash so they can avoid credit problems with their farmers. They also would like documentation procedures to be more streamlined and to encounter fewer

problems with customs, particularly when returning home with imported goods.

Because of the general neglect of domestic agriculture in the Caribbean traders also suffer from produce shortages which exacerbate competitive conditions. As Dalia explains: "The most difficult aspect right now is that the produce is short. When there is a shortage, everybody tries to see whether they can cut across one another to get the best buy."

Lack of credit is a further problem which plagues many individuals in the informal sector. Most are unable to obtain loans from any formal institution. Formal assistance of any sort is rare, though hucksters themselves are wary of experts who attempt to interfere with their trade. Low interest loans are desirable amongst traders so that they may invest in their business without incurring accumulating debts.

Lastly, these women suffer from numerous health problems such as stress, high blood pressure, swollen ankles and feet, headaches, backaches, and dizziness. The working conditions are extremely hard and few women can afford to take time off to recuperate. Traders are often exhausted. According to Iris:

There were some times when I couldn't go partying at all because I was too tired. Sometimes for six months, five months I never go out you know. When I come here Fridays as soon as I come from the plane I think of sleeping.

Most of these problems are not novel to the trade. They have always existed for these traders and hence most women absorb the burdens with only mild grumblings. They are accepted as part and parcel of the work and many see them as the necessary price to pay for maintaining independence and autonomy in the trade.

While all the above problems threaten the trade's efficiency and profitability they have not undermined its existence. The women endure these difficulties and the trade survives. There are broader issues however that threaten the very existence of the trade. First, traders, as part of the informal sector, do not receive the recognition they deserve. The trading population is largely comprised of lower class, uneducated Afro-Caribbean women and the prevailing social stigma is that these women could not find a "better" and more socially acceptable and important occupation. As a result the value of the work these women do is also marginalized and their status as workers is considered inferior to that of a formal sector worker. Over the last several years the number of traders operating out of St. Vincent and Dominica has declined significantly. Little attention however has been given to the declining employment rates in this sector, nor have formal attempts been made to ameliorate the situation.

I was surprised while in St. Vincent at the amount of attention and political and economic concern caused by the

closure of an American sporting goods firm in the country. The firm which employed approximately four hundred workers to assemble tennis rackets closed down and left the country claiming that the demand for the particular tennis racket assembled there had ceased. Outside from the employment offered, the firm had no beneficial links to the local economy. No skills were created, no technology was transferred and no spillover jobs or industries were created. The loss of four hundred jobs however seemed to paralyze the government with the Prime Minister addressing the nation that the closure was a severe blow to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In contrast the loss of more than four hundred jobs in the trafficking industry which has many links to the domestic economy, paled in recognition to the sporting goods affair. Perhaps the differences stem from the fact that the foreign sporting goods company represented a pillar of the "new" IMF sponsored developmental thrust in the region while the inter-island trade does not.

The general vulnerability of the region's economies is also a factor threatening the inter-island trade. The countries in the region are more competitive in their policies and extra-regionally oriented development platforms than they are integrated or cooperative. Consequently St. Vincent's formal economy is more likely to be affected by changes in US economic policy than Trinidadian economic policy. The inter-island trade however, which is regionally

oriented and integrated is vulnerable when changes occur within the region. For example when Guadeloupe decided as part of its national development plan to restrict the importation of foreign plantains, it is unlikely that Dominica was consulted as to how this would affect its domestic agricultural sector which exports plantains, via hucksters, to Guadeloupe. Dominican hucksters are coping with this situation by smuggling plantains into Guadeloupe at a sizeable risk. But what will happen to Dominican growers and hucksters when Guadeloupe reestablishes its own plantain production thereby displacing the presence of Dominican plantains? While traders attempt to control as many aspects of their trade that they can, market fluctuations and changing economic conditions and policies within the region are areas in which they are vulnerable. The most classic example is the experience of Vincentian traffickers and the Trinidad market over the last fifteen years.

Boom and bust

The case of Trinidad and Tobago underscores the risks involved in the inter-island trade and the precarious nature of the region's economies as a whole. In the 1970s Trinidad started demanding and consuming more produce from the Windward Islands. The Trinidad market was ideal for Vincentian traffickers for several reasons. First, the economy was booming. As a result of the boom in the

petroleum industry caused by the oil crisis millions of dollars passed through the hands of Trinidadians. The service sector expanded, construction boomed and expectedly agriculture declined. Trinidadians imported everything from consumer goods to food. Trinidad's food import bill in 1982 was close to TT\$ 900 million (Phillips 1985, 29).

Vincentian traffickers sold tons of produce and were able to purchase whatever they needed for themselves. Hardware, lumber, building materials, steel and mattresses were among the goods purchased in Trinidad by Vincentian traffickers (Phillips 1985, 19). Second, the TT dollar was on par with the EC dollar, meaning the traffickers did not incur any losses when converting their earnings from TT to EC dollars. Third, Trinidad is close geographically to St. Vincent and transportation between the two countries was frequent and efficient. Schooners could carry produce from St. Vincent to Trinidad on a weekly basis. Last, many Vincentians have friends and family in Trinidad thereby enabling them to rely on these networks for assistance in their trade in terms of accomodation or transportation or marketing.

Operating within these conditions traders were able to earn between EC\$900 and EC\$1500 a week. The present material conditions of the traffickers who operated during this period are indicative of the money tnat was to be made. Many traffickers have their own vehicles, which are often large transport trucks. Others are known to have acquired

land and built homes which are said to be the nicest in their communities.

It was during this period that contraband trading became a particularly lucrative venture for traffickers from the Windwards. Marijuana and contraband whisky were desired and affordable by many Trinidadians. Traffickers bringing produce into the island were keenly aware of this demand and hence for years the trade in ground provisions, coconuts and other produce was a guise for the real traffic in drugs and alcohol. Similarly inter-island traders were in a position to profit from currency racketeering. Before the devaluations of the Trinidad and Tobago (TT) dollar, traffickers from St. Vincent, and likely other Windward Islands, would bring US dollars into Trinidad, sell them on the black market and then either buy goods in Trinidad or convert the TT dollars to EC dollars, which then were on par. To conceal the racketeering from the Central Bank, traffickers would often "fudge" their invoices claiming they had sold more than they actually had thus accounting for their additional currency. This form of trafficking has also subsided as the TT dollar has been devalued against the EC dollar.

Iris is one Vincentian trafficker who reaped the benefits of this boom. She entered trafficking with

nothing. She actually joined a money pyramid¹ to get her initial capital. After only six years of involvement in the trade to Trinidad Iris has built herself the nicest and biggest house in her neighbourhood. Everyone in the area knows who she is and where she lives. She rarely traffics these days -- maybe once every two months. But she has established a small clothing business for herself and seems to have no problem supporting herself and her children.

It seems however that those golden days of the trade to Trinidad have passed. Currently, less than 100 tons per week are exported with an annual value of under EC\$20 million. The number of traffickers has also dropped from over 400 in 1985 to less than 100 at present (Joseph & La Gra 1990, 9). There are numerous reasons for this decline in the trade to Trinidad. Foremost is the decline in the petrochemical industry in Trinidad. The resultant negative ramifications on the other sectors caused an overall decline in the economy as inflows of foreign exchange dropped rapidly. Spiralling inflation was then followed by lay-offs and reduced employment. The population was forced to economize. There was a movement back to agriculture and backyard gardening was reintroduced or extended. Local food production emerged and substitutes for formerly imported

¹. A money pyramid is a semi-legal hierarchical system of accumulating money in which people at one level of the pyramid pay money to fewer people at the level above them. Ultimately the system takes on a pyramid form with one person at the top accumulating the most money.

consumer goods and food items were developed (Joseph & La Gra 1990, 9; Cuales & Lagro 1989, 12). This crisis seriously affected the state of the trade of produce for Vincentian traffickers. With scarce money chasing excess goods, lower prices for Vincentian agricultural produce resulted. Also the scarcity of foreign exchange in Trinidad and Tobago has made it more difficult for traffickers to obtain payment for their produce. These problems have been compounded by two devaluations of the TT dollar. The last one in 1988 reduced the incomes of the traffickers by 43% (Cuales & Lagro 1987, 12).

As a result much displacement has occurred in the industry. Some traffickers have initiated or increased trading to Barbados. The Barbados market however is a precarious one. Traffickers' produce is difficult to market in Barbados because of the quality standards demanded. Mangoes were banned from importation several years ago for phytosanitary reasons. While the trade in mangoes has resumed traffickers must assure that their mangoes are "perfect", free even from harmless black spots. Furthermore the "supermarket culture" developing in Barbados has forced traffickers to sell to supermarkets where buyers seem to prefer long straight carrots from the U.S. to short stubby ones from the Windwards.

Many of the traffickers involved in trade to Barbados do not travel to the island to sell. Increasingly these

women are arranging for their goods to be collected and sold by agents in Barbados. Veronica, Clarissa, Laila, and Bernice all sell this way. This way the women can pursue other forms of employment if available. The overwhelming majority of the former 462 traffickers have simply left the trade altogether. Many have gone into banana production where small farmers are still guaranteed a fairly steady income. Presently only a handful of traders continue to market produce in Trinidad.

The reduced activity in trafficking has had ramifications throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Many small farmers who regularly produced and sold root crops for the inter-island trade have been effected. Production of root crops has declined to a portion of what it was at peak trading periods. Many other "informal" jobs have been lost by those who worked as transport drivers, dock workers etc. This unemployment among traffickers, farmers, and intermediate helpers however is invisible officially since the employment itself was invisible officially.

Organizing for Survival

Informal Organization

Though inter-island trading is predominantly an individualistic enterprise, traders have survived over the years and dealt with many of the problems they encounter through informal types of organization. In St. Vincent it

is not uncommon to find small groups of women sharing transport costs, employing the same port hands, and selling their produce through the same agent in Barbados. Similarly, one trader may travel to Barbados or Trinidad to sell for several women, including herself. For new traders in particular such cooperative measures are more cost efficient, less risky financially, and allow women who are unable to travel regularly to their trading destinations to participate in the trade.

Carol told me about her cooperative venture trading to St. Martin with Nellie and one other Vincentian woman:

So I get this other lady and I tell her I never go to St. Martin and I would like somebody else to go there. So I get this lady Nellie and we go together and then a next lady she come and join us. But this lady now she is out and another lady from Bequia is in.

Many traders also have reciprocal relationships with their shippers. In Dominica for example, several hucksters like Corinne, Joyce, and Esther regularly ship their goods aboard Yvonne's husband's boat. He guarantees space for their load and they in turn guarantee him their business. Upon arrival in port many traders share transport costs to the marketplace. When we arrived in Guadeloupe, one young huckster, Sammy, immediately went into town to rent a small transport vehicle and returned to transport his load as well as the loads of others to the market. If traders work efficiently upon arrival in Guadeloupe some sales can be completed before the market closes on the day of arrival.

In the market, though traders sell individually, they respect each other's market space. They keep a watchful eye on each other's produce if someone must run errands or is napping. Esther was sick for a couple of days while we were in Guadeloupe. While she rested the other traders would watch her goods and make her sales if necessary.

Though many traders arrange for their own accomodation in their trading country, some share accomodation. Iris and three other Vincentian women have an apartment which they rent together in Trinidad. Similarly, Carol, Nellie and their third trading partner from Bequia regularly share a guest house in St. Martin.

Perhaps the most well known form of cooperation amongst traders is the susu. Before the establishment of formal traders organizations, hucksters and traffickers did not have formal access to credit. Instead they had to rely on their own informal credit networks. Susu is basically an association formed upon a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or part, to each contributor in rotation (Levin 1986, 19). According to Iris:

Now when you get that money now that come as a savings -- because some of the susu used to go on so long, some of them six months.... Well the first time I get the money I buying steel and all things.

Sususes have been relied on as a source of capital amongst people in the West Indies for generations. According to Earlene Horne of the St. Vincent Farmers'

Union, during the prosperous days of the trade, traffickers would pool TT\$1000 to TT\$2000 each and often as many as 50 traders would be involved. This money was often used by traders to make large purchases of land at home in St. Vincent. This form of organization succeeded when the trade was more profitable. Traders do not engage in the susu anymore.

Formal Organization

Formal organization has played a pivotal role in preventing the traders in these islands from disappearing into obscurity. While the traders have survived for years unorganized, the state of domestic agriculture has never been so bleak, nor have food import bills in the region been so high. Traders are realizing that their traditional independent survival strategies are not enough. Organization however is not a panacea for all the ills encountered by the traders and often can do little to alter the situation. The two cases below indicate how external socio-economic conditions are as important to an organizations success as are its internal dynamics.

The Traffickers' Small Business Association

In 1983, as a result of the many problems they were facing at the time, such as the flooding of the Trinidad market, some traders organized themselves into the Traffickers' Small Business Association (TSBA) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (UNECLAC 1988, 19). The

functioning of the organization has progressed slowly however largely because few traders have time to devote to the organization and the TSBA lacked a full time staff. Also while the majority of traffickers were women the Executive Committee was comprised of mostly men. It was not until 1989, through a grant from the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), that the association was able to hire three full time staff and become a truly functional organization (TSBA 1990).

The Association's main concerns have been to secure a profitable income for traders and to promote measures calculated to benefit and protect the interests of its members (TSBA 1990). More specifically the organization is attempting to establish training programmes for both new entrants to the trade and experienced traffickers. Areas to be covered would include: plant quarantine regulations, post-harvest requirements, export documentation and licenses, simple record keeping, marketing regulations, simple curing of root crops and effective use of packaging material. Second, the association is exploring the development of new and existing markets. Third, the TSBA is attempting to encourage the sale of improved packaging materials to the traders. Fourth, the Association's staff assist members in the preparation of their shipping documents. Lastly, the TSBA acts as a coordinating unit

between boat owners, government officials and support organizations (Joseph & La Gra 1990, 10).

These endeavours all have experienced some success. One workshop has been held on post-harvest handling of agricultural produce. A three member delegation was sent to Trinidad to assess complaints made by members and a four member team was sent to Martinique to explore the market potential for Vincentian produce. Many traffickers use the Association's warehouse and boxes for packaging produce and most take advantage of the shipping document preparation.

The Association's members are 95% female and 5% male reflecting the gender ratio in the trade as a whole. Membership of the association grew from a membership of about 143 in 1983 to 173 in 1985 to over 300 members in 1986 (Lagro 1988, 12). According to TSBA General Manager Norman Pemberton, however, due to the downturn in the trade, the present membership stands at approximately 80. The Association has a Board of Directors consisting of six elected members from the Association and two ex-officio members who are representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Trade and/or Agriculture (TSBA, 1990). The organization's activities look better on paper, however, than they do in reality. Though the membership of the Association now stands at eighty it is not clear how this number is determined given that only one member had paid her/his subscription for 1989. The Association seems to

count anyone who uses the facilities or services of the organization as a member. This would include all those who package produce in the warehouse, purchase boxes, and obtain shipping documents through the Association.

The Board of Directors is more of a symbol than an actual agent of democracy and collective organization. In 1989 the Board experienced a complete deterioration with one member migrating to the United States, and two members, including the president, being removed for conduct "not conducive with the aims and objectives of the Association" (TSBA 1990). As a result the remainder could not form a quorum and the Board was dissolved. The 1990 Board seems fraught with similar difficulties.

The relationship between the Association and the Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Trade and/or Agriculture is one of tension and not cooperation. I had the displeasure of witnessing the Annual General Meeting of the TSBA in April 1990. While the meeting began with enough members to form a quorum the meeting soon became dominated by representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Trade and other "experts" whose attitude towards the traffickers was one of condescension and arrogance. Rather than encouraging the traders, or supporting them, insults were hurled at them, accusing them of laziness, apathy and non-participation. Furthermore, attempts were made to manipulate the choices for Board members and the

qualifications of the General Manager were undermined. It was extremely distressing to witness this display of utter condescension. It was clear that these so-called experts with degrees felt that they understood the reality of the trafficking situation better than the traffickers themselves. It was no surprise consequently that when it came time to vote for Board members there were not enough voting members present to form a quorum. What happened that day was not surprising. Traffickers are extremely individualistic people and if the activities of an organization do not seem to respect them and work with them rather than against them, they will see no benefits to be gained by joining.

Also the senior positions on the Board are held by men and not women who represent 90% of the organization's membership. Women however do not seem interested in holding these positions which is indicative of the general feeling of apathy towards the Association.

The Association's problems essentially stem from the fact that presently, when the conditions of the trade are difficult, traffickers are becoming more individualistic and less cooperative. Traders, in order to make as much money for themselves as possible are more likely to "cut across" other traders than cooperate with them. Most traders also do not believe the TSBA has brought forth many benefits for traffickers over the years. This has led to declining

membership and lack of active participation in the Association. The Catch-22 for the TSBA is that while traffickers are reluctant to join the organization because they do not see any benefits to be gained, it is precisely active participation by members that the organization needs to implement any benefits for traders.

The Dominican Hucksters' Association

Unlike the Vincentian traffickers, the Dominican hucksters have a strong organization that is attempting to deal effectively with many of the above concerns. The Dominican Hucksters' Association (DHA) was formed by a small group of concerned traders in July 1981. Following hurricanes David and Allen which swept over Dominica in 1979 leaving acute social and economic despair, a great many people turned to huckstering for survival. An emergency food programme had been put into place with an emphasis placed on local crops -- hence there was money to be made in the distribution of these crops. The sudden influx of traders however led to uncontrolled competition and wild price swings. There was urgent need for self-regulation requiring collective action and hence the DHA was formed, the first independent and voluntary organization of its kind in the Caribbean (Homiaik 1986, 30-1). After obtaining an abandoned waterfront warehouse for their operations from the Charles' government the DHA secured a \$97,000 grant from the Inter-American Foundation in 1982, enabling them to hire a

full-time executive secretary. The DHA has been a success story ever since. In 1987 the DHA had 360 members and membership continues to grow (UNECLAC 1988, 21).

Cecil Joseph, the DHA's executive secretary, explains that the principle objective of the organization is to improve the economic lot of hucksters. Hence the Association provides a number of technical and financial services for its members including handling export documents and requests for visas, maintaining individual tax records, investigating traders complaints, both overseas and locally, providing training and appropriate packaging materials, furnishing loans, conducting market research, and negotiating with governments and international agencies on behalf of traders (Lagro 1990, 35).

Among the most successful of the DHA's endeavours is the revolving loan programme which enables traders to borrow up to EC\$3000 at one time at 1% interest per month. Working capital is often scarce for hucksters and the trade is a very high risk business in which there are windfall profits and windfall losses. Hence many traders take advantage of the credit programme. Hucksters have up to 5 months to settle their loan. The requirements for participation in the programme are that a huckster must have been a member of the DHA for at least six months; s/he is required to present at least three shipping bills as evidence of active trading; s/he must participate in one of the Association's costing

workshops; another member of the DHA has to co-sign the loan; and the huckster must be packaging at least 50% of his/her exports in packages approved by the DHA (Joseph 1990, 22). All the requirements ensure accountability to one's peers, a key element of the programme.

A further success of the organization is its sale of packaging material -- primarily cardboard cartons. According to Cecil Joseph, excluding his own salary, the DHA is now financially self-sustaining, a situation largely due to the sale of boxes. In their first year of operation the DHA earned EC\$3000 from carton sales. This year's earnings have amounted to EC\$175,000.

While the DHA has not eliminated all the problems associated with the inter-island trade, they have tempered some of the burdens and instilled a sense of confidence and cooperation amongst members that challenges can be met. I witnessed a marked difference in attitude towards my research between the Dominican and Vincentian hucksters. While there were traders on both islands who were cooperative and forthcoming with information, the Dominicans overall were more comfortable with sharing their experiences, being interviewed or videotaped. The Vincentians however were much more cautious and suspicious of my intentions. This difference in attitude may have a great deal to do with the supportive environment within

which the Dominicans trade and the more risky, unsupportive environment experienced by the Vincentians.

The key to the DHA's success however lies not so much in its programmes but in the dedication and trust of its members. In an organization this small, individuals can make all the difference. One of the organizations's most dynamic individuals is its President, Mrs. Ogaro. Mrs. Ogaro was among the original group of concerned hucksters who saw a need for collective action. Since organizing the DHA some ten years ago she has taken time out from her own hectic trading cycle to attend board meetings, travel to special seminars, represent the DHA before regional institutions, and meet with hucksters individually and in groups to discuss their problems. She has always put the organization first, even if it has meant sacrificing her own business to do so. She in fact was the "guinea pig" when the DHA was experimenting with new packaging materials. Her trading success with the new boxes led other hucksters to follow her lead. Ogaro has been trading for almost twenty-five years and knows many of the DHA's members personally. She speaks their language and hence they trust her as a leader. She has commented however that sometimes her fellow hucksters rely on her too much expecting and knowing that she will sacrifice of her time for the organization so they will not have to. Ogaro realizes that many hucksters are prepared to accept the benefits provided by the DHA without

contributing their time and energy. Hence she has often canvassed door to door enlisting members to attend meetings and training sessions. Her contribution is indeed invaluable and the DHA would not be the success it is today without her.

Equally invaluable is the commitment of Executive-Secretary, Cecil Joseph. On paper Joseph could be one of those bureaucratic experts of whom hucksters are weary. He is educated -- at the Tropical Produce Institute in London and the Ruppin Institute of Agriculture in Israel -- he wields considerable power as executive-secretary, he is respected by the Dominican government and amongst the agricultural and marketing institutions, he is male while most members are female, and he is paid for his work while the board members are not. Yet Joseph is perceived as anything but a threat to hucksters. Rather they respect him as their "leader," often turning to him for advice with their problems. On those days when hucksters are at home in Dominica, it is not uncommon to find a handful of hucksters at the DHA waiting to speak to Joseph. Given their lifestyle hucksters can be boisterous, aggressive, stubborn and impatient individuals. Aware of this tendency Joseph realizes that in dealing with hucksters he cannot embody any of these traits. As Homiak (1986) notes, Joseph:

sits quietly at his desk and listens patiently to members' problems. He appreciates the dangers, in face-to-face encounters, of undermining the pride and pluckiness that have allowed so many hucksters to get

by for so long. After the complaints have been thoroughly aired, he suggests rather than dictates possible solutions. (32)

Joseph has always been committed to making hucksters a part of any changes the organization undergoes.

One wonders however what will become of the DHA when both Joseph and Ogaro are absent. This is a very real possibility for the DHA given that Mrs. Ogaro seems ready to retire and Joseph is likely not to renew his contract as executive-secretary. Presently it is not clear whether there are those willing and able to take over the organization with the same commitment and energy as its current leaders.

The Question of Gender

One issue relevant to the inter-island trade on which neither the TSBA nor the DHA formulate policy is gender. While membership in both organizations is at least 80% percent women, the particular concerns that the traders, as women, may have are not specifically addressed. Both Associations state that their primary concern is the economic aspect of the trade and catering to the needs members have as traders. Gender then essentially becomes a neutral factor in the Associations' activities. Therefore while these organizations provide a forum for members to air grievances concerning relations with farmers, shipping, packaging, market instability, hassles at customs, theft, and post-harvest losses, there is little room for

exploration of the gender-related problems that they also encounter as part of their activity. These would include difficulties with managing and supporting a household singlehandedly, finding suitable care for children while away, dealing with male partners negative attitudes towards the trade, and violence that can and does result from this tension.

This is quite unlike a similar organization, The Self-Employed Womens' Association (SEWA) of Ahmedabad, India, also an organization of informal sector workers, which pays particular attention to the fact that most participants in the informal economy are women and as women have specific needs. SEWA has drawn attention to the facts: that illiteracy is gender related and that many self-employed women are illiterate; that women have poorer access to credit than men; and that self-employed women require daycare facilities and advice on how to deal with hostile male partners. SEWA also addresses legal, marketing and technical issues which presently are the general concern of the TSBA and DHA (SEWA 1982).

Perhaps gender has not become a matter of concern for the TSBA and DHA because the women traders do not see these organizations as fora for discussion on these issues. Before the organizations existed these women had no one except themselves to rely on for either the social or economic aspects of their trade. Now while they have

assistance with the economic aspects they alone still assume full responsibility for the social aspects. And because they have had to do so for so long, it may appear that they require no assistance in these areas. Consequently the activities of the traders' organizations become gender neutral.

Gender however is anything but a neutral factor in understanding the nature and dynamic of the trade. Huckstering is very much an activity that has been shaped and in fact continues to exist because of women and the particular circumstances of their lives. Huckstering is a complete lifestyle that begins when a woman awakes in the morning to feed, and send her children off to school, not when she begins buying produce. The crucial difference therefore, between SEWA on the one hand and the TSBA and DHA on the other is that while the former does not compartmentalize its members lives into private and public or social and economic spheres, the others do. The following chapter, which deals with the gender dimensions of the inter-island trade, enables a more holistic, human-centred understanding of the phenomenon of huckstering.

While traders' organizations are successful in dealing with problems traders experience within the trade, broader, external factors are less easily tackled. Organizations can improve packaging material, shipping and freight facilities and provide much needed credit, but they have little

influence in preventing other countries from devaluating their currency, or placing import restrictions on foreign goods. In short, they cannot guarantee a steady or consistently lucrative income for their traders. Traders have survived in the trade for decades without access to credit, or improved packaging materials or other services provided by the organizations. They have not survived however without markets for their goods. Presently in St. Vincent, despite the TSBA's attempts to seek out new markets for traffickers, because of declining markets, membership in the organization as well as the overall number of traders is declining.

Ultimately, while organization has been a positive step for the trade it does not ensure its survival. Guaranteeing steady markets for traders' goods requires the cooperation of the region's governments. Presently, the region's governments develop policies based on national rather than a regional interest. This is a disadvantage to traders who operate on a regional scale and are sometimes adversely effected by various national policies which restrict their ability to trade. If the trade is to survive, a concerted regional effort by traders, organizations, and government is necessary. Perhaps a turn to more regionally oriented and integrated policies will occur with the imminent close of the banana boom era.

CHAPTER SIX

THE INTER-ISLAND TRADE AND WOMEN'S LIVES

The history of the informal sector in the West Indies, especially during slavery and the post emancipation period, reveals that the dynamism that was present in the sector was generated from the goals and initiative of the people themselves. Were it not for the desire amongst the African population for an independent life, the informal economy in the West Indies would not have developed and expanded as it did. Unlike the growth-centred formal economy, the basis of the informal economy was human-centred being shaped by and responding to the needs of the people. This continues to be the case today. Hence to understand fully the dynamics of an informal sector activity like huckstering one must understand the motivations and goals of the people who are the essence of its existence.

In the contemporary West Indies roughly eighty percent of hucksters are women. The discussion in this chapter focusses on how the trade impacts on these women's lives. First it explores the socio-economic and personal factors which have motivated women to join the trade. It then challenges the myth that the inter-island trade is a backwater for women with no skills and education arguing instead that the skills these women possess are a primary factor in their ability to sell better than most men in the

trade. The chapter also explores how these women balance the many activities in their lives, including childcare, household maintenance and financial management and how, as a result of their lifestyles, they have restructured gender relations in their lives. Lastly, the chapter discusses the issue of empowerment within the context of these women's lives focussing specifically on what ways the trade has contributed to these women's self-esteem and autonomy.

The Decision to Become an Inter-Island Trader

A Choice Amongst Limited Options

Since emancipation women have predominated in the internal marketing system in the West Indies. As chapter three suggests, this predominance emerged, not by coincidence, but as a result of policies which discriminated against women for wage labour, and social norms that entrenched the nuclear family model of male breadwinner and dependent housewife. Consequently the scope of women's economic activity was limited to the household and the informal economy.

Similarly, in the contemporary Caribbean, the choices women make are made within limited options and opportunities. I asked all the women I spoke with why they decided to become traders. As I came to understand their motivation I also came to understand the various social and economic factors which have defined the parameters of their options.

Household Structure

Throughout West Indian history household structure has had an important impact on the nature of women's economic participation. Since slavery the Afro-Caribbean household has never reflected the nuclear family model imposed during a period of colonialism. Women have been actively involved politically, economically and socially inside and outside of the home. Plantation capitalism, though it separated women's productive and reproductive tasks, did not relegate them to the domestic sphere to be dependent on a male breadwinner. Rather it demanded their involvement in both spheres with their roles as workers often taking precedence (Barrow 1988, 165). And with their activities as marketers and higglers, women established an economic independence apart from men. Women's economic contribution in the so-called productive sphere of society is not stigmatized in the West Indies as it is in some other cultures.

In the contemporary Caribbean, forty percent of households are headed by women. Many of the traders I spoke with were both the primary caregivers and income earners in their households. Lagro (1990) statistics reveal that amongst the Windward Island traders 45.3 percent are single and 54.7 percent are in partnership arrangements -- married/commonlaw or visiting union (16) . Almost all traders, regardless of their union status have children. Older traders beyond age forty have an average of 7.1

children (Lagro & Plotkin 1990, 18). Most traders have come from a poor background and are determined to raise their children under more comfortable and privileged circumstances.

All the women had children or responsibility for children before they began trading. While some had steady male partners who were contributing to the household income, others were sole financial supporters. Regardless, all women indicated that before becoming traders their household income was insufficient in meeting their needs. For many women the decision to become a trader stems from the need to provide for large households which are surviving on limited or strained financial resources.

Because of varying circumstances the majority of women I spoke with were sole supporters in their households. Two years ago, Clarissa had six children and was working at odd jobs trying to support them. With little or no support from male companions or her children's fathers, she took up trafficking to improve her financial situation. Alicia is a single woman with no children of her own but numerous familial responsibilities. She cares for her alcoholic sister's children whom she claims were being neglected. She also provides for her mother who is aging and blind. For Alicia huckstering has been the best way to earn the necessary income she needs to attend to her family's needs. Eight years ago Iris was a young single woman with no money

and several children to care for. She took a chance, put what little money she had into a money pyramid and used this money as start up capital for her trafficking. Her investment paid off and she has never regretted the decision.

Both Laila and Carol were left to provide for themselves and their families after their husbands died. Carol complained of how difficult it was for her thirteen years ago after her husband died. She had so many bills to pay and so much food to buy to support her nine children. She began trafficking to Trinidad and Barbados soon after and has successfully provided for her family with this income ever since. Similarly Velma began trading eighteen years ago with several small children, no help from male companions and a meagre income earned from sewing. Today Velma can proudly boast that she is the largest and among the most successful traders in Dominica.

While Corinne and Dalia both have income earning spouses their large families could not survive on one income. Corinne told me how she would lay awake at night as a young woman and worry about how she and her husband were going to provide for and educate all their children. She explained her situation to me:

I was really poor and all what I used to do I couldn't maintain my children. We were poor, I used to work for my father, my father wasn't paying me....it was sufficient just to buy a bread and we couldn't save or do nothing so I told my husband that that work, working for my father I can't do. So I tell him I will start

(huckstering). I am not civil servant, I don't have education but I will start on my own, try to buy and go and sell. He laughed at me when I told him so. He tell me 'Corinne, you think you can do this thing?' That time I was young but I said 'yes, since a woman can do it, I can do it too, I'll try.'

Similarly Dalia explained how over twenty years ago, though her husband was farming at the time, the money was insufficient to raise their children:

I was at home with children and I really wanted to go out and do something for my living. I never really wanted to sit home and mind babies I wanted to do something to help the situation in the home because my husband was the only one working and the salary was very small and we had children and they were coming big and we wanted to educate them and if my husband was earning alone things would be too tough. So I said let me make a trial (at trading).

For all the women the decision to become a huckster or trafficker was based largely on household financial necessity and need.

Education

Since emancipation the educational system in the West Indies has been an important vehicle for the institution of gender roles. Around the turn of the century areas like agriculture, shoe-making, and woodwork were geared towards boys while horticulture, needlework and home economics were geared towards girls (Reddock 1989, 62-3). As a result while the skills attained by boys enabled them to be channelled into trades and apprenticeships, those attained by girls trained them to be "good wives and mothers." A balanced education was denied to both girls and boys.

These educational tendencies which persisted until the 1960's entrenched the male breadwinner/dependent housewife model. As in the past however, the model continued to reflect inaccurately the reality in the West Indies where "dependency" was not a situation which women could afford or even desire. Hence women were left in need of income but without the skills desired by the labour market. Even today girls tend to be channelled into non-technical, non-scientific areas while the industrial economic thrust demands an increasingly skilled technical and scientific workforce (Wiltshire-Brodber 1988, 149). Hence even though girls achieve higher levels of education than boys at present in St. Vincent and Dominica they are not trained or educated in those areas which the formal sector demands. Many women who are currently hucksters and traffickers were children in the 1930s and 1940s and hence were subject to these discriminatory education practices.

Most traders operating from St. Vincent and Dominica have a limited formal educational background. Lagro and Plotkin (1990) found that, of the traders they surveyed, 85.7 per cent had some formal education at the primary level while 14.2 per cent had exposure at the secondary level (16). Furthermore, younger traders tended to have more formal education than older ones. My own findings were consistent with these results.

There are numerous reasons why these women left school at an early age. The most common amongst hucksters seem to be poverty and pregnancy. Many came from poor households where they were one of many children. For poor African households with large numbers of children the costs of education -- books, fees, uniforms -- are often straining on the household income and hence many children leave school with only a standard education. This was the case for both Alicia and Corinne. Alicia was forced to leave school at the age of fifteen to support herself because her mother no longer could. Similarly Corinne's grandmother paid for her education until she reached seventh standard. Corinne's mother had died and her father and stepmother took little interest in her welfare.

Nellie, Veronica, and Laila all left school in their early teens when they each became pregnant with their first child. The responsibility of caring for a small child, the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy regardless of its frequency, and restrictive school regulations made it difficult if not impossible for these women to continue their formal education.

The majority of hucksters and traffickers in Dominica and St. Vincent have no more than a primary school education. Most have the educational skills necessary for their work -- reading, writing and basic arithmetic. For poor uneducated women in the Caribbean there are few

employment opportunities available. The inter-island trade offers them a chance to earn a more reasonable income than their limited education would permit in other areas. Not all the women in the trade however are uneducated. In recent years the trade has experienced an increase in entrants with higher levels of education, many of whom are children and relatives of traders. This trend is not so much an indication of increasing educational demands of the trade as it is an indication of the dismal employment scene facing even educated women in the Caribbean today.

Employment Opportunities

Throughout West Indian history, women's employment opportunities have been shaped by colonial ideology and/or the needs of capital. As chapter three illustrates during different periods women have been pulled into or pushed out of the labour market as the region's economies shifted and changed. The overall tendency however has been a steady decline in female labour participation since the turn of the century (Massiah 1989; Hewitt 1987). This has occurred in spite of the Lewis model's attempts to channel women out of "unproductive" work and into "productive" light industry in the 1950's and the more recent efforts to absorb female labour into export processing zones. As Table 1 in chapter three indicates male labour participation rates are double and sometimes three times that for women. The current

crisis in the region has only intensified this situation with opportunities for paid employment becoming more scarce.

Since emancipation the gender division of labour in the West Indies has placed a higher value on male labour thereby limiting the income earning activities of women within the formal economy. Even today in St. Vincent and the Grenadines the minimum daily wage for women in the industrial sector is EC\$10.40 as compared with EC\$13.52 for men. Similarly in agriculture the daily wage for women is EC\$7.40 and EC\$10.40 for men (Committee for the Development of Women 1984, 6). Despite this fact St. Vincent and the Grenadines has the highest rates for economic inactivity amongst women in the Windward Islands. See Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Economic Inactivity by Country, Age-group and Sex

Age	St Lucia		Grenada		Dominica		St Vincent*	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
15-19	5.7	27.4	9.2	38.6	8.9	40.9	4.9	42.9
20-24	2.5	33.4	5.3	33.8	4.0	37.5	2.5	44.1
25-44	2.4	46.0	5.0	41.6	3.3	46.8	2.1	49.0
45-64	10.0	62.8	10.3	57.7	10.3	60.5	8.3	59.4
65+	49.3	86.4	45.7	86.6	52.8	86.6	45.3	87.9

*refers to St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Source: Lagro & Plotkin 1990, 3.

In Dominica after the devastating impact of Hurricanes David and Alan, many women were displaced from their jobs. As a result many women poured into the informal sector. During the current crisis, structural adjustment policies in the islands have led to increasing unemployment rates,

public sector cutbacks and declining real wages. While in the past informal sector participation was not as desirable as formal sector employment, the trend is slowly changing as the informal sector diversifies and opportunities for earning more money are available in informal sector activities. Consequently, an activity like informal commercial importing has grown significantly even in small islands like Dominica and St. Vincent. Similarly, in countries like Dominica, where the inter-island trade still nets a profitable income for traders, this means competitive market conditions.

Most of the women I spoke with had previous employment experience in various sectors. Some lost their jobs and consequently became inter-island traders, while others willfully left previous employment. For most of this century opportunities available for women in the informal sector were domestic service or self-employing activities like petty trading or sewing. Most of the women interviewed in St. Vincent and Dominica were involved in precisely this type of activity before entering the inter-island trade.

Veronica, a trafficker from St. Vincent used to sell produce in the internal marketing system before becoming a trafficker eleven years ago. She switched activities because she felt a much "quicker dollar" would be made selling in Barbados. She also hated sitting all day in the hot sun competing with so many other traders in St. Vincent. Internal traders generally earn a fraction of what is earned

by inter-island traders. In the Kingstown Central Market internal traders make approximately EC\$20 a day. Inter-island traders earn EC\$1000 each trading trip, on average. Bertha had a shop in St. Vincent for a few years before she began trafficking to Trinidad nine years ago. She claimed however that her children always kept taking things from the store and hence she made little money. Barbara and Althea were domestics in Dominica in the late seventies. Both stated that though the work is harder the money is better in the inter-island trade.

Some of the Dominican women lived and worked in Guadeloupe before returning to Dominica and becoming hucksters. Josephine, was a domestic in Guadeloupe and Antigua before becoming a huckster. She left domestic work because she preferred to work for herself. Similarly, Alicia moved to Guadeloupe from Dominica in the 1970s and sold barbecued chicken to earn income. She now hucksters regularly to Guadeloupe and hopes eventually to open a snack bar in Dominica with her earnings. Many Dominicans have lived temporarily or permanently in Guadeloupe. Wages tend to be higher, the market is larger, and consumerism abounds. Hence a small business person can often earn more than she would in Dominica.

There is another group of younger and more formally educated traffickers who have left formal sector employment to work as hucksters. Cathy Ann worked in a drugstore until

the store closed three years ago. Though the drug store work was easier she prefers huckstering because the money is better. Jackie was studying to be a nurse when funds ran out and she could not take her exams. Though she loved nursing, she does not regret becoming a huckster. Claudia worked for eight months in the recently closed sporting goods factory before giving up this work in favour of trafficking:

I worked in a factory once, the sporting goods factory. But I found it too restrictive. At a certain time during the day, when it getting close to lunch time, you know you are sanding this racket and there is a lot of dust on your skin and you can't go to the washroom until 12:00. And then when it come to the close of the day around three thirty and you can't go to the washroom until four. So I still find it is a lot of restriction. You cannot be seen moving from your work place to somebody else's work place. It is real exploitation. And I am telling you the amount of work they want you to push out in one day!

Joyce worked in an office as a clerk before voluntarily leaving because she found the work boring. She much prefers the lifestyle of a huckster. And finally, Esther, who is Joyce's cousin, worked in the United States last year for a while. To her surprise she found life much more difficult in the U.S. than she had anticipated. She left her US\$160 (EC\$400) a week job in Florida when she realized she could make EC\$1000 a week as a huckster at home.

Overall, amongst the women I spoke with there were two predominant factors which motivated them to become inter-island traders. One was the financial returns and the other was the independence the job offered. These women were very

concerned about providing a home and education for their many children and employment in EPZs or as a domestic or internal marketer simply did not provide sufficient income to fulfill these goals. While in St. Vincent and Dominica I also spoke with some domestic workers and internal traders and even visited their homes. These women often have similar familial responsibilities as inter-island traders but have more difficulty in fulfilling them due to their meagre earnings. Their homes, as a result, are far inferior to those of inter-island traders often being made of corrugated iron and board and without toilet facilities. Secondly, women workers in EPZs and domestic workers are often treated poorly by their employers. Many complain of being treated without dignity and respect. The inter-island trade offers women the opportunity to work for themselves.

The Invisible Skill Bank: Life Experience

The obvious question which comes to mind is why more women who have familial responsibilities, limited employment opportunities and lack formal education just like these traders do not enter the trade if it is financially more lucrative and offers more independence and autonomy. All women, however, cannot or do not choose the trade as an income-earning option. Amongst the uninformed, the inter-island trade appears as a vocation which earns fast cash yet requires few skills. Women who work in the agricultural sector however know otherwise. Both Martha and Dolores, who

are internal traders in St. Vincent, told me that in spite of the money that can be made through trafficking, they could never endure the stress, strain, hassles and hustling involved in the inter-island trade. Martha is an older woman and has several children and grandchildren whom she cares for with little support. Her house is small and pales in comparison to the homes of some traffickers. She feels the financial risks involved in trafficking are too great for her. Florabelle, another internal trader, used to trade to Trinidad. She gave it up however because she could no longer take the stress.

Inter-island trading is clearly not for every woman, does not fit into every woman's lifestyle and does not suit every woman's personality. Hucksters have been called boisterous, aggressive, demanding, and uncompromising. They are and they have to be to survive in a competitive business. Many have also rearranged their lives to participate in the trade. Furthermore, these women are far from unskilled though society continues to label them as so. Success in their vocation requires a complex matrix of skills and attributes not found in just anyone.

Both the women I met with and those interviewed by Lagro (1990) indicated the following qualities as necessary to be a good trader: physical strength, an ability to talk to and deal with people, being well mannered, patient, courageous, persistent, loving, intelligent and having an

ability to handle money. While the odd woman stated that she felt that the physical nature of the work made it more suited for men, most women felt that women more than men embodied the traits required for the trade and hence predominated in it. Both male and female traders agree that women are better traders than men. According to Jackie, "Men are too savage and don't have the patience to sell ... they get restless. Women can sell much better and are warmer and nicer to customers. Men don't know how to deal with customers." Dalia agrees:

Women have more patience... You see we go today if it did not turn out good, we'll go another day, maybe next day will bring something better. But if the man comes this trip and it did not turn out good he will say 'I'm not going back.' But we, the women we will continue. That is wh' you just a see a few men in the trade.

Bertha, Althea, Margaret and Evelyn all felt that men lacked the patience and perserverence to sit in the sun all day and sell or even to sit in the market and chat as many of the women do. They also complained that men are too quick to lower prices to sell off their goods. Bertha commented that her husband had tried trafficking once but could not handle it. Bernice agrees that men cannot sell but she does not understand why: "A man would be there whole day! I don't know the reason why but man will be there all day and not get nothing sell while the woman will get it sell." After eighteen years of trading Velma feels men are just plain lazy and because of it are unsuccessful hucksters. According to Corinne "The men really don't like to sit down

and sell. Some of them they saying that it is women's work."

These women are aware that, unlike the men who have tried the trade and failed, they have the qualities and temperament necessary to succeed. Many of the skills these women bring to bear on their trade have been developed out of their lifetime experiences as caregivers, household providers, consumers and mothers. According to Mike Browne of the St. Vincent Union of Teachers Adult Education Programme:

women by virtue of the socialization process that puts them in the centre of the home and in the centre of the cooking and the kitchen, will be much more adept and skillful at purchasing produce. They will know what is good based on their actual day to day experience. They are much better generally at shopping and can handle a budget better than most men.

As consumers themselves these women understand what items are necessary for household food consumption and what quality of produce other consumers expect. They know various uses for different products that men may not know. Corinne's ability to sell her produce by describing its various uses to her customers was impressive. She was able to sell off kilos of rotting plaintains to a woman by telling her how to use them to make an appetizing gruel for her pigs.

These women also possess skills that they acquire through years of participation as hucksters. Though they lack formal training and education, formal education skills

are not those most necessary to succeed as a trader. Traders themselves say that "to be a good huckster one must have patience and a lot of love." After watching them in action one soon realizes that successful huckstering also involves skills in pricing and buying, organization, diplomacy and marketing. These of course must be accompanied by determination and endurance. For hucksters these are not skills learned in school but those acquired over time with experience. Without these skills even a individual with six 'A' level credits will fail as a huckster.

An illustrative example is the case of Joyce. Joyce is Corinne's oldest daughter. She completed her 'O' levels a few years ago and has been a huckster for the last three years. According to her mother, Joyce does not take her work seriously and has a lot to learn. I accompanied Joyce on one of her trading trips to Guadeloupe. She arrived for the boat to Guadeloupe ten minutes after it was scheduled to depart. Upon arrival in Guadeloupe she was more interested in socializing with one of her regular buyers (a young man) than watching her load come off the boat. She then was caught by Guadeloupe customs with 27 boxes of plantains which hucksters are prohibited from importing into Guadeloupe and had to pay the consequent fine of 2000 francs. On marketing days Joyce would usually wake up at 6 a.m. -- three hours after other hucksters had already begun

selling in the market. She would often wander away from her produce usually in the direction of her male friend. By one o'clock in the afternoon, Joyce would leave the market to return home and sleep. Other hucksters remain in the market until four or five in the afternoon. Consequently, by the end of the week much of Joyce's produce had spoiled or remained unsold. Her solution was to carry the remaining produce to her mother and ask her to sell it for her.

Though Corinne who is a veteran huckster cussed and reprimanded her daughter, she took the produce and was able to sell it all within the span of a few hours. That same evening when the boat returns to Dominica, Joyce had to request that the captain stay in port an extra ten minutes so she could run home and collect something she had forgotten. On the return trip from Guadeloupe to Dominica I finally realized the benefits of Joyce's formal education when many of the older hucksters who are without basic literacy skills had her complete their immigration forms for them.

Being women and bringing their particular skills to the trade has both advantages and disadvantages for traders. On the one hand their patience and social skills facilitate trust and good working relationships with wholesalers, farmers and customers. Similarly they are less suspicious in the eyes of customs and immigration officials. In recent years, being a woman made all the difference in the

contraband trade to Trinidad. Women carrying contraband whisky or marijuana were able to "sweet talk" their way past customs officials on a regular basis. At the same time however, because the trade is considered to be women's work, it receives the same low value and recognition as other predominantly female activities such as domestic work and childcare. Trading by many is considered to be an extension of a women's primary "role" as a housewife. Many traders in fact state their occupation as housewife. Furthermore, as part of the informal sector, these women are not formally considered workers.

While many people in Caribbean society accept that these women work hard, this hard work is not recognized as skilled work. Consequently it is more often regarded as casual, peripheral activity than as having developmental or transformational potential. Ironically, unskilled EPZ labour is more valorized than inter-island trading because it is perceived to have more developmental and growth potential for Caribbean society.

**The Balancing Act: The Reordering and Restructuring
of Gender Relations**

Perhaps the greatest skill these women demonstrate is their ability to balance and integrate the many activities and responsibilities in their lives. It is misleading however to understand these women's lives in terms of roles. Besides being traders these women are mothers, wives or

partners, household heads, income earners and entrepreneurs. The women do not compartmentalize or juggle these "roles" but rather integrate and conform them to their lifestyle. Consequently, one cannot understand how these women mother without understanding how they huckster. Their lifestyle in fact challenges traditional definitions of what a mother or wife or household head should be. The unconventionality of their lives forces one to rethink the appropriateness of understanding women's experiences in terms of roles.

Before these women became inter-island traders some of them conformed more to the traditional roles of mother, and wife. Some worked within the home raising their children while their husbands brought home the family wage. Velma conformed to this image, also earning income as a seamstress. Similarly, Margaret spent most of her time tending to a family of fourteen. "There was twelve children plus my husband and myself so you can imagine I had to put four pounds of rice on the fire and another pot of provisions and another five pounds of fish and meat ... and that is everyday." Though many women were employed in some form, most spent every night with their children and partners, prepared the meals and sent their children off to school each morning. The decision to become an inter-island trader therefore meant significant changes for themselves and their families.

The remainder of the chapter examines how these women have incorporated childcare, household maintenance, financial management and personal relationships with men into their unconventional lifestyle as a trader. It also examines how this process has contributed both to a restructuring of gender relations in these women's lives and to their empowerment as women.

Child Care and Nurturing

All of the women I spoke with had responsibility for children, whether they were their own or someone else's. Furthermore when most women began trading these children were young and in need of proper supervision and care. Women most often relied on kin networks for the provision of this care. The extended family network is extremely important in Caribbean society. It is not uncommon to find three generations living under one roof or for children to reside with aunts or grandmothers rather than with their mothers. This social network and the societal acceptance of this brand of parenting has greatly benefited inter-island traders. Alicia, Carol, Bernice, Joyce, Dalia and Velma have all relied on their mothers for childcare while they are away trading. In most cases the women reside with their mothers making the arrangement more convenient. Velma's mother has been her greatest source of support, passing on the skills of the trade to her daughter eighteen years ago and caring for her grandchildren when Velma was out of the

country. Today Velma reciprocates and shares her new home with her mother. Though Joyce has a house of her own her four year old son, Adrian, lives with Joyce's mother, Corinne. When both Joyce and Corinne are away trading Adrian is cared for by his aunts.

Other women rely on a number of people living both in their home country and their trading destination. Clarissa's youngest child lives with her sister on Union Island. Clarissa trades regularly on Union Island at which time she visits her daughter. Her other children are minded by neighbours in St. Vincent. Similarly, Veronica's six oldest children are cared for by her brother and his girlfriend in St. Vincent while her baby daughter lives with Veronica's sister in Barbados who Veronica also stays with while trading. Of Kathryn's four children, one lives with her boyfriend in Dominica while the other three stay with family in Guadeloupe. Cathy Ann travels to Guadeloupe with her small son and together they stay with Cathy Ann's sister. Her older child lives with Cathy Ann's boyfriend in Dominica. None of the women seemed to have a problem with this arrangement.

Margaret, Phyllis, Claudia and Dalia all indicated that their husbands took some if not all responsibility for the children in their wives' absence. Phyllis, who was an active trader forty years ago and had eight small children, told me "I had to keep after my husband to look after the

children." But she assured me he did the cooking and the cleaning. Claudia is extremely proud of her husband's support and household management while she was away trading. Dalia is similarly proud of her husband's parenting abilities:

I couldn't deserve more. He found things were moving on better and he really helped me with the children. And when I was away he used to take care of the children. He would even wash. Yes, he would wash, he would cook, he would see to it that the children go to school and help my mother and see that they were well behaved. And I cannot desire more for my children. Although I stayed a few years away from them they were well taken care of.

The arrangements women make for their children are not always free. When children are left with neighbours and even relatives, allowances must be paid for food and other expenses. Interestingly however, more women relied on female relatives -- sisters, mothers, aunts -- than on their male partners or the children's fathers. Lagro and Plotkin (1990) make a similar observation. There are several probable causes for this preference. First, these women, like most women in Caribbean society, accept primary responsibility for the well-being of their children. Childcare is perceived to be part of a woman's role and natural ability. Traders therefore are concerned to leave their children with those whom they feel will provide the best care. In many cases male partners are not the children's fathers or are not permanently residing with these women. Even in cases where male partners were present

and were the fathers of the children, women hired extra female help or enlisted the assistance of their mothers.

Alternative parenting methods which diverge from the nuclear family, mother-caregiver ideal are commonplace in the West Indies. Extended family nurturing and parenting social systems allow women such as hucksters and traffickers to lead the lifestyles they do. In spite of this however childcare and nurturing is still considered a woman's role and responsibility in West Indian society. As a result, women such as traders can rarely turn to men for support in this area. Where male support is given as in the case of Dalia and Phyllis it is considered to be above and beyond the duties and responsibilities of most men.

Household Maintenance, Cleaning and Cooking

Though these women are absent from their homes a great deal they still assume responsibility for general household maintenance. Corinne returns home from selling in the Dominica market on Saturday afternoons and begins cooking and cleaning her house. I arrived at her home one afternoon to find her still in her market clothes, busily mopping the kitchen floor and cooking. Jackie similarly does all her own housework when she returns from Guadeloupe on Fridays. She receives no help from her husband.

Given their hectic schedules, many women relegate responsibility to older female children or hired help in their absence. Though Rita has hired a woman to clean her

home and do the laundry, when she can, she prefers to do the cooking herself. Nellie has a very cooperative division of labour in her home. Everyone lends a hand but she seems to rely most on her son's girlfriend, the only other adult female in her home at the moment. Dalia's daughters and granddaughters run an efficient household whether she is there or not. During school vacations Dalia sent her daughters to cooking classes. As a result Dalia barely has to lift a finger in the kitchen which leaves her with more time for her business, and for her responsibilities as President of the DHA.

Overall, the allocation of tasks within these women's households has remained gender-based with women assuming responsibility for most childcare, cooking, and cleaning tasks and men (if present) assuming responsibility for maintaining the family farm, and doing home renovations. Out of necessity however some cross-over has occurred within households with sons and husbands becoming more capable and self-reliant and skilled in traditionally female tasks.

Financial Management

Most of the traders have come from poor backgrounds. Many are from poor agricultural families. For long time traders, years of trafficking has brought considerable prosperity to their lives over the years. Traders however have been careful to manage their increased incomes wisely and direct their funds towards particular goals. A primary

motivating factor behind these women's decision to become hucksters was their desire to educate their children. As a result of their trade earnings these women can proudly say that their children are not amongst those on the streets who cannot afford school uniforms and books. All the women I spoke with were able to provide their children with significantly more education than they had achieved themselves. Many have graduated from secondary school and now hold "white collar" jobs in St. Vincent and Dominica. Dalia is proud of the fact that she has been able to provide post secondary education for two of her children -- one at a convent in Trinidad and the other at the University of the West Indies in Barbados.

A second area of investment for these women is their homes. As a result of the trade many women have been able to purchase land on which they have both farmed and built comfortable homes. Claudia specifically decided to become a trafficker because she and her husband needed money to build their house. I was truly surprised not only by the size and quality of some of these homes, but also by the furnishings and appliances within them. Velma has recently built a new home in Portsmouth. She is still paying it off with her income from huckstering. When I visited Margaret's home she indicated that the living area where we were seated used to be her entire home. Over the last ten years with income from her huckstering she and her husband have made several

additions to the original structure. When I arranged to visit Iris at her home in St. Vincent she told me to tell any minibus driver to let me off at "Iris the trafficker's house." She guaranteed they would know where I wanted to go. Sure enough, they dropped me with ease in front of her house which is difficult for anyone to miss considering it is the biggest and nicest in the area. I was sure I had the wrong house though passers-by kept assuring me that this was indeed Iris's home. It took a long while for Iris to come to the door -- she had been out late the night before at a Carnival "fete" and was not fully awake and lucid. Even after meeting Iris I was still unconvinced that this was the woman I was scheduled to meet. She was so young, perhaps in her mid-thirties and it surprised me that someone who had only traded to Trinidad for eight years could afford such a comfortable existence. I soon learned however that for traffickers, the boom in Trinidad was truly a windfall opportunity.

Traders have also made significant investments in vehicles --cars, trucks and pick-up vans -- which greatly assist them in the purchasing, collecting and transporting of the produce. In some cases traders have also been able to assist their children in purchasing vehicles.

Some women also have invested in small businesses at home. Aside from their trade many long time traders also run small shops and boutiques. The largest boutique in

Roseau is known to be owned by a former huckster. Dalia has two shops in Dominica, one which she runs herself and the other which her daughter runs. Margaret, Velma and Rita all have shops in Portsmouth. Margaret and Rita run habersdashery/rumshop/snackette style shops while Velma has a large clothing store. Both Margaret and Velma have hired help to mind their shops while Rita receives assistance from her grandchildren. Alicia has plans to invest her earnings in a snackette in Dominica also. In Kingstown Bernice and her brothers have street stalls from which they sell imported items from around the Caribbean. Nellie has a large booth in the Kingstown market which she stocks with many imported goods from St. Martin and Iris runs a clothing boutique from her home.

Most of the traders who have built homes, purchased vehicles, and established businesses, did so when the inter-island trade was more profitable. These days with the decline in domestic agriculture, import restrictions in various islands and the increasing competitiveness of the trade, lucrative earnings are less forthcoming. And with stringent structural adjustment policies placing a strain on household resources, earnings from the trade do not go as far as they used to.

Under these conditions, older traders who have established themselves, secured education for their children and built their homes, are less vulnerable than the younger

and newer entrants in the trade. Younger traders are finding it more difficult to make ends meet since windfall profits are not as evident as they were in the past. Many of these traders must rely on a variety of income earning strategies to survive. Several Vincentian women like Clarissa combine trafficking with smocking, a form of industrial outworking. They are not as secure in their trade as older established traders. Clarissa told me she does not know how long she will traffic. If she finds a higher paying job she will quit the trade. Though Evelyn has been trading for eight years to Trinidad she and her husband only began construction of their house after the devaluation of the Trinidad dollar. As a result her earnings have dropped and the building of the house is progressing slowly. To supplement her income, Evelyn also imports as an ICI occasionally.

While most women are the primary income earners in their households they are not always the sole earners. Some, though not all, male partners contribute to the household income. Evelyn, Dalia and Esther's partners contribute to the household income through their farming activities. Nellie's husband works in shipping and Cathy Ann's husband is a police officer. Corinne claims that her husband does nothing but sleep. He has not worked since she began huckstering. He does not seem to help her with her trading either though he does pick her up at the port Friday

nights when she returns from Guadeloupe. Similarly, Jackie's husband earns but contributes nothing to the household. Jackie alone is responsible for all the bills, providing food, and for meeting the children's expenses.

Many of the traders have older children who live with them, work and provide additional income, if not for household maintenance, at least for themselves. Some have children living abroad who remit money to their families at home. Some of the fathers of Clarissa's children live in Canada and she receives some financial support from them.

Most evident amongst these women is that they have not squandered away their earnings but have saved and invested wisely. Two factors surprised me however in their financial management strategies. First, outside of the purchase of a vehicle, very few women invest money into their trade. They do not experiment with new products, they are reluctant to invest in new packaging materials and they spend next to nothing on food and accommodation while away from home. This has a great deal to do with the volatility of the trade. Women feel more confident spending on more secure investments at home rather than risking a loss in the trade. In this regard I concur with Lefranc's observation that amongst traders an explicit profit orientation appears to be missing. Because of their financial responsibilities to family members, for traders, stable security takes

precedence over risk-taking and aggressive profit-making (Lefranc 1988, 17).

Secondly, very few women keep accounts and records of their trading activities. On average only 18.2 percent of traders keep records (Lagro & Plotkin 1990, 39). The lack of record-keeping however does not imply poor business sense. As illustrated below many traders develop their own system:

Well, you have to know how to handle the money and you know what the profits are like, so if you, say, make twenty dollars you spend ten dollars and you hold ten dollars. From that you can save five dollars and buy with five dollars. (Lagro & Plotkin 1990, 39)

Velma is one of Dominica's largest traders and prides herself on the fact that she keeps accurate records of her business and therefore cannot be cheated:

Everything I put on board (the boat) I have in my book ... I add up everything and know what I have on boat ... so they can't fool me on freight.

Experience has taught many traders that trading has the potential to be more than a fast cash strategy for them. Hence over the years they have come to appreciate the trade as a key to their family's prosperity. As Dalia observes:

Hucksters before used to have a laissez-faire attitude. They just wouldn't care. They used to do things anyway, anyhow but right now as a group we do things better. And before I would say that hucksters used to invest more in jewelry. You would see them having a nice earring and big gold chains. You know that is how they used to invest their money. But right now hucksters don't do that. They invest their money wisely. They invest their money in having a nice home. They spend their money sending their children to school, seeing that their children are well educaced. They invest their money in having a vehicle so they can

go around into the country areas to collect their produce to ship. So people look at hucksters now to be women of the day.

Restructuring Gender Relations

The lifestyle of an inter-island trader presents a curious challenge to a traditional understanding of gender relations and gender roles. On the one hand, as an activity that deals in the marketing and distribution of local agricultural commodities, it is considered "women's work" and inappropriate work for men. On the other hand however, it is an activity that undermines traditional eurocentric conceptions of women's roles as mothers and wives, which never have reflected gender relations in Caribbean society accurately but which nevertheless have ideological impact. Trafficking removes women from direct care and responsibility for the home and the children on a regular basis, in many cases inverts the male breadwinner/dependent housewife model, and does not provide a man with the security of knowing that his partner is sleeping in his bed every night. This reality has had significant bearing on gender relations in the lives of these traders.

Most of the women I spoke with indicated that their relationships with men have been somewhat strained by the fact that they trade. There is a prevailing notion, particularly amongst the male population in the islands that hucksters "have one man at home and one man abroad." A Dominican man took particular interest in my research since

he was becoming involved with a woman who was a huckster. He had serious reservations about the relationship, however, because of the woman's occupation. He told me that the woman's assertiveness, self-determination and independence attracted him and I pointed out that these qualities had a great deal to do with her occupation and hence he should feel proud of her work. He then admitted that his primary concern was the woman's fidelity to him since she travelled in the islands so frequently. And because of this fear, he felt it best that he terminate the relationship. What surprised me was that he was basing his suspicions on heresay about traders in general and had no valid reason to distrust the woman with whom he was involved. Similarly a Grenadian man told me quite confidently that traders paid off male farmers and helpers with sexual favours. He felt these women were more willing to pay for their produce to be carried from the farm to the roadside with their bodies rather than with cash. Again these notions were not based on any first hand experience but rather on what the man assumed to be "common knowledge."

Traders are well aware of these assumptions of sexual promiscuity. According to Veronica, "Some people cuss traffickers. They say they are going away to take men." In fact, these notions are shared by many of the traders' partners. Kathryn, Jackie and Corinne all told me that their partners were suspicious of their sexual activities

abroad. This attitude angers and frustrates the women. According to Jackie "men who don't trust, don't trust themselves first." Many of the women stated that men do not realize that when these women leave home they leave to work and do not have time for anything else. This issue along with others has created an extremely hostile relationship between Jackie and her partner. She admitted to me that whenever she is home she is subject to physical and verbal abuse by her husband. Women are also frustrated by their partners' refusal to recognize what they do as legitimate "work." They felt that if their partners took more interest in their work or even joined them on a trading cycle they would realize how difficult and time-consuming the work is.

In West Indian society as in many societies, there exists a social double standard for men and women regarding sexual promiscuity and infidelity. Whether it is based on actual incidence or heresay, men are stereotyped as being transient, and more likely to have extra-marital sexual relations with women. Women are perceived as more home-centred and responsible for children. Essentially if there is a "wandering" spouse it is expected and often accepted that it will be the male partner. This type of relationship as Chapter Three illustrates has developed as part of the social fabric of West Indian culture and though many women are not happy with their partner's infidelity, they also are not entirely surprised by it. Evelyn told me quite casually

one day that her husband "liked" a lot of women. She shrugged and added " But that is common amongst Vincentian men." Similarly, I met Corinne in the market one day as she was telling several of her customers how she had arrived home from Guadeloupe on Friday night to find that, without her prior knowledge, her husband had taken some money and left for St. Croix. Neither she nor her daughters had any idea as to why he went, where he was staying, who he was with or when and if he was coming home. Corinne's attitude towards the issue surprised me. She was very casual, telling many people about it and did not seem distressed, or embarrassed or hurt. Her daughters all took the incident casually as well. It was as though it was "no big surprise." Men however are not as able to accept their partners's promiscuity casually. When a wife "cheats" on her husband it is a blow not only to the man's ego but also his sense of power and control.

Almost all of the women had partners who wanted them to stay home more. Many reasons are given. Nellie's husband feels trading is not good for her blood pressure and that she is getting too fat and hence should quit trading. Esther's partner wants her to stay at home and help him farm his bananas. Whatever the reason, it seems that most men are uncomfortable with their partners' frequent absences. Again, in most relationships and households in the Caribbean, men, not women, assume the more transient

migratory role. It is not uncommon for male members of a household to be away for months at a time as migrant workers abroad nor is it uncommon for them to be found more often at their favourite rum shop than at home. Even while away they are psychologically secure knowing that their partners are at home taking care of the household and its members.

Interestingly when the roles are reversed, and women travel frequently such as hucksters, men have little control or knowledge as to their partner's whereabouts or activities which undermines their sense of security and causes them to distrust and pressure their partners. As Corinne and Evelyn reveal however, women also have no guarantees as to their husband's whereabouts. Yet because male irresponsibility and promiscuity is more sanctioned socially in West Indian society, women more so than men are socially and psychologically "prepared" to deal with the prospect of infidelity.

Many men tolerate their partners' trading because of the financial returns. However, despite the tension their trading may cause, hucksters are not prepared to give up their work to quell their partners' suspicions and insecurities. They would sooner give up their relationships. Veronica told me that she and her husband "got mashed up" because of her trading. She is quite suspicious of male intentions:

"Men today are very difficult. Some like to sit down and depend on women to work for them. Some men are

just sitting down and waiting until you (the woman) works and then they want to come and grab from you to see what they can get."

When I asked the women how their partners felt about trading most responded with comments like "He have no mind to tell me that I cannot go!" Clarissa indicated to me that she keeps her relationship with her present male partner at an arm's length distance, telling me that he comes around to see her when she wants him to and when she feels like seeing him. She is very determined not to let her personal relationships with men rule her life.

Some male partners however are not threatened by their partners work and have adjusted to the restructured gender relations in their lives. Bertha, Dalia, Claudia, Nellie, and Margaret's husbands all seem to have an understanding of their wives' work. According to Nellie's husband: "Husbands that do not allow their wives to work are useless men!" Nellie is happy that her husband is supportive of her trafficking and has adjusted to her frequent absences. Claudia and her husband made a joint decision that she would take up trafficking to sell their own produce and earn extra money for their household. As a result he was very supportive and willing to accept additional domestic and childcare responsibilities. Dalia's husband is extremely supportive and proud of his wife. He takes pride in the fact that he was an active participant in raising his children while Dalia was away. He added that if it were not

for his wife and her huckstering they would never have been able to educate all their children or afford to build their home and buy a car. According to Cecil Joseph, more husbands are beginning to appreciate their wives' work:

You have a situation where men are playing a very active role. They found out that by helping their wives there is mutual satisfaction that they both know what it is like and there is mutual trust. Because when you know how hard it is then you will understand and appreciate why she must stay out on the road another day.... so there is less level of distrust when people are separated.

These women have restructured gender relations not only between themselves and their partners but also in their household amongst other family members. Over the years the children have learned to deal with their mothers' periodic absences. According to Earlene Horne, Secretary of the National Farmer's Union of St.Vincent and the Grenadines, children of traffickers are more independent and less spoiled. Both Allison and Evelyn told me that their sons cook and take care of themselves. Many sons and daughters assist their mothers with packaging, loading and selling. Corinne and Althea's daughters can frequently be found by their mother's side in the market. Similarly many children both sons and daughters have followed in their mother's footsteps and have become traders themselves. Barbara and Dione trade as a mother daughter team. Most children however sell separately from their parents. They succeed however from the skills and experience passed on to them from their mothers. Veronica, Corinne, Phyllis, and Althea

all have children who trade. In all cases however, the mothers are admittedly better traders than their children.

Empowerment

What is most impressive about these women is their self-determined, positive, assertive attitude towards themselves and their work. The trade has brought more to their lives than money, education for their children, a home, a car and other material things. There were two predominant reasons why women became traders. One was to provide for and educate their children. The other was that the job offered women autonomy, independence and the ability to work for no one but themselves. The former was to satisfy their sense of responsibility to those who depend on them and the latter was to satisfy their needs as women.

Because of the independence the trade offers, these women are willing to endure the financial, physical and emotional stress the trade may hold. This independence however goes beyond business autonomy. The trade provides women with time and space away from the demands of children, spouses and household responsibilities. While away trading these women do not have to be concerned about preparing meals, cleaning their homes and attending to everyone else's needs. Knowing that these matters are being taken care of at home, traders have peace of mind to tend to their own needs and their business needs while away. Traders however are not self-indulgent with this independence. My

experience with them suggests that they do not have affairs with men in their trading country, nor do they spend lavishly on themselves or take in the nightlife while away. These women never lose sight of their responsibilities and goals. They are there to work and the majority of their time is spent working. The independence they experience and value is more a state of mind of knowing that they have only themselves to answer to while away.

Over the years as the trade has come to be predominated by women it has been shaped and conformed to women's needs and lifestyles and essentially has become a locus of womanculture. While trafficking is an individualistic business, traders share a special relationship with each other. According to Iris "Traffickers understand one another. Nobody understands traffickers like traffickers." This mutual understanding and shared experience has created a sort of sisterhood amongst traders. While the increasingly competitive nature of the trade has strained some of these relationships, women maintain their cooperation amongst their friends. Cottica explained that the sense of sisterhood is particularly strong amongst women who ship their produce together on the same boat and in turn sell close together in the market.

Market life represents more than sitting and selling all day. Though some traders go about their own business, selling in the countryside, with little contact with other

traders, many sell closely together in the markets, take their meals together, and even share accomodation. Close proximity to each other in the market allows them to chat, joke, gossip, argue and also to watch over each other's goods if someone wants to nap, or shower, or run an errand. In Guadeloupe in the evening when the market closes, traders gather together around a nearby caravan (food van) and continue to socialize over dinner. For many of these women, this interactive element of an individualistic business makes the trading lifestyle bearable and worthwhile.

This fact was particularly visible one day in Guadeloupe. It was a national holiday. The market was empty and most of the local traders had closed their stalls for the day and remained at home. The Dominican hucksters however were all in the market, not to sell but to lime¹. Several of them covered their produce and gathered together in the shade, some stretched out on the ground, others sitting on wooden crates or stools. They laughed, chatted, and argued about anything and everything. The "hot" topic that afternoon and in fact that entire week was the upcoming Dominican elections. Corinne was there too, spouting her Freedom Party praises. It was somewhat surprising to see her. She sells in a busy retail market on the other side of town and I thought she would have relished the opportunity

¹ In the Caribbean, a popular expression for relaxing with friends is "liming."

to take a day off and rest at home. Instead she took a taxi to this market so she could pass the time liming with other traders. Even Esther, who was suffering from influenza at the time, stayed in the market. Instead of going to her sister's to recuperate she lay down on her makeshift bed of cardboard boxes and tarpaulin. Every once in a while when the conversation got interesting or someone would tell a good joke, she would raise her head and laugh or throw in her "two cents". This is clearly where these women wanted to be. According to Jackie "I would rather sit in the market and pass the time joking and laughing with other hucksters rather than to sit at home with music, all alone and bored."

For Jackie, huckstering offers her a refuge away from her husband who beats her. She complained of the pressure she feels everytime she returns home. She feels she cannot take the "blows" much longer. For Jackie and many other women, the trade offers them an existence apart from their lives at home. It offers them experiences which are uniquely theirs and a chance to share these experiences with other women like themselves. It provides them with time to be with themselves which many women in Caribbean society lack. For most traders, this time is precious. Both Nellie and Margaret have tried to give up the trade. Both their attempts however were unsuccessful. Nellie stopped trading for a year but missed the travelling. Bored with sitting at

home she resumed her trading. Margaret similarly confesses that she cannot sit around. She does not know what she would do without her huckstering.

Just as women have changed the nature of the trade over time, the trade similarly has affected the personalities of the women who participate in it, particularly long time traders. Amongst the women I spoke with, those who had traded the longest struck me as having a strong sense of self-respect, pride and confidence. In particular, Dalia, Corinne, Bertha, Velma, Carol and Bernice are all extremely proud of what they do and the way they do it. They have endured years of trading and this perseverance has paid off for them. They have successfully achieved their desired goals to provide education for their children and a comfortable life for their families. As Corinne says: "It's really a hustle to be a huckster but I proud of it because my whole life is that I have done to raise all my children." They are also among the most successful of traders in St. Vincent and Dominica and are regarded amongst their peers as women of experience and skill. The experience of trading has empowered them as women. According to Bernice:

People in St. Vincent, long ago, when I now start used to look at the traffickers like they were the worst people because they lifting bags. But then, in '84-'85 when they see that the traffickers are really trying to develop St. Vincent, I find that they recognize the traffickers. And then as I say it's how you care yourself. It you respect yourself, the world respects you, and if you don't respect yourself the world won't respect you.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOOKING AHEAD

If one walks along the CARICOM jetty on a Wednesday morning in Trinidad today it is noticeably a far quieter place than it was ten years ago. Similarly sellers from St. Vincent and Grenada occupy less space in Trinidad's central market than they have in the past. Though Dominican hucksters are experiencing a minor upswing in their trade since Hurricane Hugo destroyed much of Guadeloupe's domestic agriculture, traders concede that they ship less produce today than they did years ago. According to Velma:

"Huckstering is a lot harder these days because they are a lot more hucksters. I used to carry a lot more cargo eighteen years ago."

Margaret told me:

"There used to be more produce and less people trading. The others who traded before me used to carry 200 or 250 bunches of plaintains and now we carry maybe 50 bunches and are struggling to sell them."

All indicators suggest that the trade of agricultural produce has declined significantly over the last decade or so. This decline signals the potential loss of an alternative, indigenous development platform for the region.

This chapter explores the developmental potential of the trade of agricultural produce for the Caribbean region. First it asserts that the trade has not been seriously considered as a development platform in the region because of the type of development strategies and development

thinking that has prevailed in the region since slavery. Second it explores what the trade offers to the region not only economically, but also culturally, socially, and politically. Third it discusses socio-political and economic barriers in Caribbean society which have prevented the trade from becoming a pillar in a regional development strategy and instead have resulted in its general disregard and marginalization in the region. In this context the chapter also discusses the development of informal commercial importing as the contemporary version of the inter-island trade and explores what it offers the region developmentally. From a human or individual level of analysis, ICI trading is as empowering to women as inter-island trading. From a regional level of analysis however, inter-island trading clearly has more long term transformational potential for the Caribbean than ICI trading. The chapter discusses this tension between empowerment and transformation. Lastly, the chapter speculates as to whether or not the trade of agricultural produce will be recognized and developed as a regional development strategy in the near future.

Presently in the Caribbean there is little disagreement over the fact that the region is in a state of crisis. Among the many and varied manifestations of this crisis are:

- i) the "scissors squeeze" on land brought about by the disintegration of domestic food systems and difficulties

with traditional export crops, on the one hand, and the rapid rise of TNC agro-processing industries based on imported inputs on the other; ii) a worsening distribution of income, wealth and access to productive resources especially in those countries where structural adjustment policies are in place; iii) massive, persistent and increasing unemployment and growing underemployment; iv) high rates of emigration among skilled workers; v) the mushrooming of the underground/parallel/informal sectors, which allocate much of the available foreign exchange to their own priorities; vi) an increase in corruption, nepotism and clientilism, evident in the heavy penetration of drug dealers and traffickers in the highest political circles in some countries; vii) massive capital flight and a high turnover of assets in the region; ix) declining living standards and widespread poverty; x) the penetration of foreign media, values and culture into the region, symbolised by the "satellite dish" culture found in every island, no matter how small, xi) accelerated foreign control of domestic resources; and xii) escalating balance of payments, fiscal and debt crises (Thomas 1988, 327-8; Deere 1990, 31-39).

The Historical Legacy

The "Sameness" Within the "Changingness"

As detailed in chapters three and four, the causes of this crisis are rooted in the developmental path pursued in the West Indies since slavery wherein domestic resources have been garnered to service overseas markets primarily in developed market economies. After examining the development of the West Indies in the post war period, it becomes evident that between WWII and 1970 virtually every sector of Caribbean economies either was tied to or owned by foreign capital. National economies came to depend almost entirely on the export sector which remained largely disconnected from them in terms of domestic linkages and local human resource development. The Puerto Rican industrialization model theoretically appeared to break with this mould but in reality offered little to the economy in terms of sustainable development. The paradox of the model was that what emerged from the strategies pursued by the West Indian countries to assert their independence and correct their historical disabilities was development with new forms of dependency. The dependence of the economies on foreign trade, finance, technology and management and the consequent drain of surpluses, bound the countries more and more firmly into the very metropolitan sources of domination they were trying to free themselves from in the pursuit of independence. Moreover, since colonization, the needs of

the broad mass of poor people in the region have played virtually no part in directing the course of production in the formal sector.

By the end of the 1960s the Caribbean had traded its old colonial dependence on Europe for a new dependency on the US. Caribbean politicians were disconnected from the productive systems in their own countries and thus went straight from colonialism to neo-colonialism without ever having any real control over their economies (Sunshine 1985, 44; Thomas 1988). Heralding Puerto Rico as the ideal, the West Indian countries successfully had imitated that country's model of unemployment and maldistribution of wealth and income. These conditions have only been exacerbated with the advent of the current crisis.

The current development debate in the region hinges on how these countries can alleviate this situation of crisis and proceed with "development." The major developmental thrust in the region currently seeks to further the region's incorporation into the world economy through measures such as the Caribbean Basin Initiative and structural adjustment. There is a great deal of skepticism however as to whether such strategies will alleviate the crisis or only serve to aggravate its current manifestations.

On the other side of the debate are those who advocate a regional economic alternative that is more inward looking and responds to the social needs of the majority rather than

the structural needs of capital. Alternative strategies are not entertained only by marginal or "radical" voices in the Caribbean. In the throes of the current crisis regional alternatives are being discussed even within political parties (Deere et al. 1990, 188). The main pillars of an alternative model of development were enunciated in "The Caribbean Basin Initiative: Caribbean Views," a report of a US congressional study mission on the Caribbean Basin Initiative in 1987. Representatives of various social interests in the Caribbean determined the following as elements of a new model for Caribbean development:

1. Self-determination: the shaping of Caribbean development strategies inside, rather than outside, the region.
2. Participation: the broad-based involvement of Caribbean people in the definition and implementation of alternative strategies.
3. Self-reliance: the building of local structures and capabilities in order to enable the region to reduce its dependence on goods, resources, and assistance from external sources.
4. Regionalism: the fostering of cooperation rather than competition among the countries of the region and the strengthening of regional organizations and regional integration.
5. Equity: the equitable distribution of assets, resources, and other benefits of development among the various social groups, and among generations as well as both genders.
6. Sustainability: the grounding of alternative strategies of development in a sound and secure environment and in local human capacity (Deere et al. 1990, 189).

These goals are also enunciated by The South Commission in The Challenge to the South, a recent report which stresses the urgency for alternative development thinking in the Third World. Most development strategies pursued in the region have failed to satisfy any of these principles. Historical development strategies pursued in the region such as plantation agriculture, extractive mineral industries, import-substitution industrialization and export-oriented industrialization, have consistently failed to meet the above criteria because they were more designed to meet the needs of international capital than to serve local needs and interests. Furthermore these strategies have served more to thwart attempts at regional integration and self-reliance than to support them (Deere et al. 1990).

Most distressing is the fact that these strategies have also failed to satisfy even their own developmental goals and objectives. For example the stated goals of export-oriented industrialization, the current development strategy pursued in the region are: employment gains, technology transfer, diversification of exports, foreign exchange earnings, increasing local value added and fostering general industrial development. This strategy has proved unsuccessful in satisfying these criteria with the exception of some employment gains. The experience of Jamaica suggests, however, that EOI attracts new entrants into the labour force (notably young women) and hence fails to affect

overall unemployment rates. This strategy has been successful however in creating a new export monoculture in the region and inducing additional forms of technological dependency with limited benefits in terms of foreign exchange earnings and local value added (Nurse 1991).

In contrast, the trade of agricultural produce is one area in which the principles for alternative development can be realized. First, like most activities within the informal sector, the nature of the trade has been determined and shaped within the Caribbean by local people and according to their needs. It is an example of how people can be equitable participants in a development platform and not merely recipients of its trickle-down effect. Second, it is a self-reliant strategy which has never relied on external inputs (human, technical, financial) for survival. The produce sold is grown and consumed within the region and local resources and skills are relied on at every step of the process, from farm to market. Third, the trade as it stands is an example of regional integration. Dominican hucksters know, for example, that Windward Island bananas and plantains are in high demand in Guadeloupe and that in turn, Guadeloupe potatoes, onions and garlic are in demand at home. By responding to regional supply and demand these women have established intricate trading networks throughout the region based on what they see as each country's comparative advantage. They have sustained an integrated

regional network (if only by a thin thread) while the region's nation states are implementing increasingly competitive policies. Fourth, unlike other development platforms, the inter-island trade represents a strategy that does not burden the poor, especially women, with regressive taxation or exploit their labour through unskilled final-touch assembly operations. Rather it develops the skills areas and resources the poor already have and builds on their own initiatives for survival. Moreover, as has been shown, the trade is compatible with women's lives and provides them with an autonomy often not offered in the formal sector. Fifth, the trade offers the region a sustainable development alternative because it sustains the agrarian fabric and agricultural products of many of the islands. It also creates considerable spillover employment into other areas such as in airlines, immigration, and shipping. Presently, regional airlines owe a great deal of their business to hucksters and traffickers. For an ordinary traveller it is virtually impossible to fly from Dominica to Guadeloupe on a Monday morning or from St. Vincent to Trinidad on a Tuesday because traders are occupying all the seats.

Throughout the region's history, strategies, both mainstream and alternative, have been borrowed, conceived outside of the Caribbean, or externally propelled. The key to a truly alternative development strategy for the region

is that it be generated from resources and strategies that are already existing in the region, such as the regional sourcing of agricultural produce through the inter-island trade.

Little heed however has been taken of this distribution network of local resources and the lessons it offers by economists and policy makers who continue to cling tenaciously to their traditional "model" of development. The various dimensions of informal trading in the current period are further testament to the decay and failure of the development model. In many of the territories it is the informal economy that is serving the employment, consumption, nutritional, financial and transportation needs of the people where the formal economy cannot. The region's policy makers' and politicians' blind faith in one development model has blinded them to alternative strategies that may exist right under their noses.

Barriers to an Alternative Strategy

The region's long history of externally propelled, unintegrated development strategies evokes some skepticism as to whether an alternative path based on the above principles can be charted. There are major socio-political and economic barriers which first must be overcome.

The State-Centric Perspective

Though political and economic integration is widely discussed in the Caribbean region, since the conquest of the territories in the fifteenth century, the integration exercised by the Caribs and the Arawaks has never been recreated. The nature of the region's incorporation into the world economy since slavery has established a particular mode of production in individual territories that has rendered them more outward oriented than inward looking. As a result throughout history Caribbean countries have produced and exported similar products and competed for the same metropolitan markets. Consequently, relations towards each other have been more competitive than cooperative or complementary. Strategies currently pursued continue to perpetuate this relationship. Countries continue to compete for the same markets for tourists, bananas, and foreign investment in export processing zones. EPZ apparel factories now exist on the smallest islands. Banana republics are now becoming pyjama republics. Bilateral arrangements under CBI, CARIBCAN, LOME, the IMF and the World Bank have further contributed to disintegrated, atomized relations in the region.

Twentieth century attempts at integration -- The West Indian Federation of the late fifties, and CARIFTA to CARICOM -- have been relatively unsuccessful because they have failed to transform either the countries' relations

with the international economy or towards each other. Caribbean countries continue to orient their exports towards external markets and import the majority of their consumer goods from outside the region. Consequently though intraregional trade has grown subsequent to CARICOM, not one country counts CARICOM as its most important source of imports (Deere et al. 1990, 193).

While formal sector strategies and policies have had state-centric and export orientation, informal sector activities like the inter-island trade have consistently been inward looking and regionally oriented. Attempts at regional integration have been misguided because they have failed to recognize and further develop the ways in which the region's territories and resources are already integrated and complementary. They also fail to realize that the traditional developmental path pursued in the region has been more disintegrative than integrative.

Supply Factors

The sad state of domestic agriculture is a severe impediment to a steady and secure inter-island trade. As discussed in chapter five, peasant agriculture, which supplies hucksters, has been neglected at all levels -- scientific, organizational, credit, and marketing. While some efforts are being made at the regional level to encourage diversification, and to support small farmers, there need to be more efforts to ensure markets for these

diversified crops. Presently many small farmers are weary of diversification and are reluctant to move away from the well-worn path of guaranteed returns in the banana industry or another cash crop sector. The incentives, credit and support that are available to farmers and agricultural workers in the extra-regional export sector must also be made available for those in the domestic agricultural sector. In Dominica for example, entrepreneurs in the tourist sector can obtain exemption from paying duty on new vehicles. This incentive however is not available to hucksters who require transport vehicles for business purposes. Farmer's Unions and Hucksters' Associations can be a progressive step towards reform, but these measures must be coupled with formal governmental assistance at both the national and regional levels.

A further barrier to be overcome on the supply side of the trade is the declining agrarian population. Agriculture, particularly domestic agriculture, continues to be perceived as a backward sector, employing the poor and uneducated population. As a result, fewer and fewer young people are willing to learn and carry on the agrarian tradition of their parents. According to Margaret this is why huckstering is devalued: "Young people view agriculture as work for old people." She also commented that parents reinforce these ideas in their children's heads by telling them that they do not want their children working hard with

a hoe in the field as they had to do. Margaret and her husband have five and a half hectares of land but cannot get anyone to farm it. She told me her children are not interested in agriculture.

Domestic agriculture can form the base for a successful development strategy in many countries in the region. Until this is realized however and more resources are channelled into this sector, it will continue to be undervalued and mired in low productivity.

Consumerist Culture and Consumption Patterns

Many advocates of alternative development strategies for the region argue that development must be geared more towards the consumption needs of the people. While it is true that production in the region is divorced from consumption, it is equally true that consumption is divorced from the region's resources. The consumption tastes, patterns and aspirations of the West Indian populace have perpetuated the import dependency of the region. The desire for foreign foods and consumer goods is widespread and in most countries the population has easy access to these items whether through legal or blackmarket means. Amongst the local people, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Parlors are among the most popular places to dine. Similarly, North American style supermarkets are displacing the traditional central markets as the preferred places to shop for food items. Though central markets offer fresher, locally grown

foodstuffs, supermarket produce tends to be cleaner, more uniform in size and shape and packaged or processed.

These patterns of consumption pose a serious threat to industries and enterprises like the inter-island trade whose survival depend on regional demand. In Barbados, supermarkets import many fruits and vegetables which are available locally. Local produce however does not meet the desired aesthetic standards and therefore is considered of inferior quality. In many islands even sugar and rice are imported from outside the region. Trinidadians complain about the poor quality of Guyanese rice and prefer to buy "Uncle Sam's"¹ rice instead. The growth of supermarket culture is testament to the fact that Caribbean society is moving away from its organic agrarian potential and towards a North American suburban ideal. Anything and everything foreign is desired by the consumers of the region. According to Margaret: "Children when they go to school these days want expensive shoes like Reeboks and they want Jeri Curls (hairstyle) and everything."

In this context hucksters simply cannot compete. Foreign tastes and consumption patterns have not only affected the demand for locally grown goods but have also hindered the region's ability to be creative and innovative with its own foodstuffs. My own experience suggests that

¹ "Uncle Sam's is the brand name of an American rice which is sold in Trinidad.

West Indians are not nearly as creative with local staple foods like rice, cassava, and corn as are people in Asia or Africa.

While the hucksters and small farmers, if supported and encouraged, can supply the region's population with local produce to meet their consumption needs, efforts must also be channelled into rendering the population's desires and demands more compatible with local supply. As Guyana's experiment with import restrictions suggests, the inward-looking strategies of politicians and economists are futile unless they are matched by similar thinking amongst Caribbean people.

The Result: The Shift to Informal Commercial Importing

These barriers, while they have worked against the stability of the inter-island trade, have been conducive to the growth in ICI trading. The increase in this activity is in fact an indicator of the environment in which traders now operate. ICIs cater to the domestic demand for foreign goods and deliver these goods at a cost cheaper than a traditional merchant. Though foreign exchange is scarce in many of the region's economies, ICI traders do not seem to have a problem acquiring it. Jamaican ICIs operate their own foreign exchange auctions and are known to control more foreign exchange than the country's central bank. One way trafficking is becoming more common in St. Vincent and Dominica. Vendors sell everything from women's

undergarments to plastic shoes and watches. Other ICI traders have accumulated enough money to open shops in which they sell their merchandise.

For many women, ICI trading offers them an independent, lucrative livelihood, without the hassles of inter-island trading. They have fewer people to deal with, fewer trips to make abroad, no worries about stolen or spoiled produce, and secure financial returns.

However, unlike the inter-island trade of agricultural produce which has the potential to transform the region's economies, ICI trading only perpetuates the legacy of import dependency. As consumer demand shifts away from local agricultural produce it is increasingly moving towards imported food, clothing and other consumer items. Traders, who are sensitive to supply and demand fluctuations, respond by cutting back on inter-island trading and increasing their suitcase trading. The shift from the former activity to the latter represents the decline of a rich, indigenous tradition to the forces of the marketplace. It also symbolizes the death knell of an informal sector activity that has possibly reached the end of the road.

Empowerment vs Transformation

I have argued in this thesis that while the informal and formal sectors essentially have been interdependent parts of the one economy throughout Caribbean history, distinctions can be made between the nature of the

4 of/de 4

PM-1 3 1/2" x 4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

activities in each sector. The primary distinction is that while informal sector activities, such as the trade of agricultural produce, have had autonomous and indigenous development potential for the region, the externally-oriented and propelled strategies in the formal sector have not. With the growth of ICI trading in the region however, this distinction is becoming less apparent. Though activities in the informal sector continue to cater to domestic demand, as domestic tastes and consumption patterns have become more externally-oriented, so too has the nature of informal trading. As a result, contemporary informal sector activities in the region are less grounded in indigenous resources and skills and have fewer positive spillover effects for the economy.

Beneria and Koldan (1987) argue that industrial homeworking in Mexico, considered part of the informal economy, is directly integrated with the formal sector through subcontracting links and therefore is part and parcel of the dominant mode of production. They point out that such activities challenge the notion that informal sector activities in general constitute the base for further development toward promotion of small enterprises or autonomous development.

Similarly, as the formal sectors in the Caribbean have become more transnationalized so too have the informal sectors. ICIs buy many of their products from foreign firms

in free zones in Panama, Puerto Rico and St. Martin. While some of these products, like shoes, garments, toys and plasticware may be assembled or produced by independent local firms in the region this is usually under subcontractual arrangements through transnational corporations. ICI trading therefore contributes to the historically dominant export-oriented, import-dependent production structure of the region. The mushrooming of ICI trading throughout the region is indicative of the increasing disengagement between the tastes and expectations of Caribbean people and indigenous resources, both human and material. Therefore the potential for an alternative development strategy to emerge from the informal sector is becoming less of a possibility.

Viewed at the regional or national level, ICI trading offers the region little developmentally in comparison to the trade of agricultural produce. At a human level however, it continues to empower those who participate in it. ICI trading offers women the same independence, ability to travel and financial rewards of the agricultural trade without many of the risks and headaches. Many traders in fact view ICI trading as a step up from the trade of agricultural produce. Though many traders have left agricultural trade to become ICI traders the reverse is uncommon. Althea used to trade agricultural produce but in search of higher profits she switched to informal commercial

importing. She has established a rigorous system for purchasing and marketing her imported goods. She makes two buying trips a month and travels to St. Martin, Puerto Rico or Venezuela. She purchases a variety of goods such as porcelain lamps, pots and glasses. She operates a stall in the heart of Roseau and her children sell some of her goods in the country on a daily basis. Similarly, many women like Bernice, Dalia, and Margaret are travelling less and concentrating more and more on their stores in which they sell imported items. In Dominica, many former hucksters are now merchants selling imported goods in stores in Roseau.

Furthermore, ICI trading has provided employment and a source of income for a great number of people, especially women who would otherwise be unemployed. Consequently, even though the region's governments are seeking ways to regulate and tax the trade, they are accomodating the activity. As Taylor observes in Jamaica:

"The Government also recognizes that it cannot provide alternative employment for the traders and that to stamp out the activity means worsening the unemployment situation in general and the unemployment situation of females in particular." (1988, 5)

As long as demand for imported goods remains high and foreign exchange can be obtained through legal, or more likely illegal, avenues the trade will continue to attract participants.

The developmental trends in the region suggest that there is a clear disjuncture between strategies that benefit

Caribbean countries at a regional level and those that empower and develop human beings. While structural adjustment policies are espoused as being beneficial for the region on a national level, they have created only resistance, hardship and disempowerment amongst Caribbean people. By the same token, many informal sector activities, like ICI trading, currency racketeering, and drug smuggling provide a means of independent survival for many people that formal sector activities simply cannot offer. They, however, are very individualistic strategies which do not offer viable development alternatives for the region.

The inter-island trade of agricultural produce is an activity that offers sustainable development potential for the region and supports indigenous enterprise and skill. Its potential however has never gone beyond representing an individual survival strategy because historically the relationship between informal and formal development strategies in the region has been disharmonious.

Future Prospects: Crisis and Change

As suggested in Chapter One, the situation of ongoing and recurrent crisis in the region reveals the urgent need for transformational change. Though countries in the region continue along their traditional development paths in the wake of the current crisis, there does appear to be some grassroots movement towards preserving the inter-island trade. While individual traders are increasing two way

trading or ICI trading to survive, and small farmers are increasingly weary of diversification, their organizations such as the Dominica Hucksters Association and various farmers organizations in the region are attempting to establish a secure regional inter-island trading network for local produce. In 1989 several trial shipments of local produce were made from Dominica and St. Lucia to Barbados and Antigua. The joint marketing venture proved successful. According to Leighton (1990):

All participating farmer organizations feel that production capabilities, market demand and profit are sufficient to justify a permanent, year-round trading relationship. With financial and technical support from assistance organizations, inter-island trade through farmer organisations can become a reality. (3)

Though still in its early stages, this venture, if successful, will provide markets for those crops produced by the Windwards' small farmers and support inward-looking agricultural development.

Serious consideration however, must be given to the fate of the huckster and trafficker if these ventures are successful. Inter-island trade through farmer organizations oversteps the role played by the huckster. These women have ensured the survival of the trade when others were not willing to undertake it and they should not be excluded if the trade is to develop in scale and scope.

Hucksters and traffickers in general are a conservative group of individuals in terms of business orientation. They generally trade only a few commodities, buy from a small

group of farmers, and are reluctant to take risks in their trading (Lefranc 1988, 17). Organization was a major step for them and in spite of its benefits they remain individualistic and competitive in their business. They are also weary of outside interference in their activities, particularly from so-called experts or fast-talking bureaucrats who have their own ideas about reforming the trade. These women have worked extremely hard to establish themselves as successful traders and it is fair to say that they fear losing the control and autonomy that they value dearly. Therefore, any effort to change the nature, form or scope of the trade must take into account these women's concerns and role. They are the preservers of an indigenous tradition in the region and if that tradition is to be revived, then they must be participants in that process.

Presently, Dominican hucksters have a great deal of faith and trust in the DHA and those who represent them within the organization. The DHA, in turn, is attempting to insure this faith by ensuring that hucksters' important role in the distribution of agricultural produce in the region is not lost in the process of agricultural reform. For example, while the DHA has been involved in inter-island trading to Antigua through Antigua's Co-operative Farmers' Association (CFA), it plans to turn over its CFA market gradually to its member hucksters. "The association sees this as a training exercise. It is designed to show members

that good quality produce sold at reasonable prices will lead to regular sales and larger volumes" (Buehl 1990, 10). Unfortunately the TSBA is currently experiencing some difficulties in terms of support and participation amongst Vincentian traffickers. As a result, though the organization would like to speak and act on behalf of the traffickers of the country, it cannot.

Whether a strong organization exists or not it is important that traders be consulted directly regarding any program for change. Feminists involved in development studies continually stress that development efforts, particularly those that directly impact on women's lives, must take into account women's needs as articulated by women themselves. I am reemphasizing this point in the case of hucksters and traffickers. While in St. Vincent and Dominica I was consulted on occasion by various people working for agricultural institutions in the region as to the needs of traders and how they would feel about certain changes in the trade. Various organizations in the region are interested in assisting the traders and have ideas of how to make their activities more efficient. There are also those that are interested in restructuring the agricultural sector in these islands and are therefore seeking information on what hucksters and traffickers do. While I assisted as far as possible my usual response was that the traders should be consulted personally. After having spent

only a few months with these women I was not an expert on their needs and lifestyle and felt I could not speak for them. For some reason many institutional researchers and policy developers find it difficult to approach the traders themselves, and deal with the issues surrounding the inter-island trade on a human level. Such interaction must be encouraged because it casts the inter-island trade not just as an economic activity but as a lifestyle with an important gender dimension. Efforts to develop, assist, and support the trade must focus not only on what the trade offers the region but also on what it offers the individuals who participate in it and how it contributes to their personal development. Only then will endeavours go beyond meeting the traders practical needs towards addressing their strategic interests as women.

Conscientization

While hucksters and traffickers in the Caribbean have the potential to be agents of social change, conscientization about this possibility is widespread neither amongst politicians or economists nor amongst the traders themselves. Traders work first and foremost for themselves. Whatever impact their work may have on employment figures, agricultural production, and GNP is of residual interest to them. Similarly, traders' organizations work for the traders to ensure their continuing ability to sustain a livelihood. They do not

engage in advocacy of the trade as a development strategy for the region. The region's governments, though they regard traders and their organizations as legitimate interest groups in Caribbean society and have made concessions towards them accordingly, continue to view informal sector activities as peripheral to development interests.

It is uncertain whether small efforts, such as the endeavours by the DHA and farmers organizations, will grow to support and develop the trade and the women who are its backbone. If one looks back, there is nothing in Caribbean history to suggest that indigenous modes of production would be accepted to have developmental potential. While integration is discussed, debated and negotiated continuously, its efforts are thwarted by a regional blindness to indigenous self-reliant development platforms, and a tenacious loyalty to and/or dependence on externally-propelled strategies.

Lacking in the region is a conscientization that "development", as it has been espoused and practiced throughout the region's history, is a concept with epistemological foundations and a logic which may be unsuitable to a Caribbean reality. There has been and continues to be widespread consensus in the region that development should conform to a western ideal and that with the "right mix" of policies that ideal can be achieved in

the Caribbean region. This explains why so many people are so anxious to migrate from the region to North America or why tastes in the region are so hungry for North American style products. This also explains why many people, including some hucksters and traffickers, hope that their countries will one day be "developed" like the West. Several traders commented to me about how they liked Barbados because it was so developed. For many West Indians Barbados is the jewel of Caribbean development, precisely because of, and not in spite of, the fact that it is the most penetrated society in terms of foreign capital, culture, and consumer goods in the region. Caribbean people have not sufficiently discussed and analyzed whether this reality and concept of development is sustainable or desirable for the region and its people in the long term.

The current crisis, however, in spite of all the hardship and poverty it has exacerbated in the region, has also generated a rethinking of the development model pursued. For many people, like hucksters and traffickers, it has also created an awareness of their role and an appreciation of what they have. Though Claudia traded as a trafficker for less than two years she reflects positively on her experience:

I think that was something worthwhile I was doing ... to build myself and to help build my country. We plant, we reap and then we buy from others also. So I am helping myself as well as helping somebody else.

Similarly, traders such as Evelyn who have experienced the decline in the Trinidad economy and the resulting unemployment and economic hardship it has caused, are increasingly appreciative of the fact that Vincentians are still tied to the land and still have their land for survival and subsistence. Alicia feels that with rising unemployment and increasing dependency in Dominica, development efforts should be more inward looking:

"Dominican don't appreciate what they have. We have many products here, like coconuts, that we could make products from instead of importing everything from away but we don't develop those industries and create jobs".

Many Dominican women commented while in Guadeloupe that while they enjoy Guadeloupe they find that the people are too dependent on the government for everything and do not work for themselves. According to Jackie: "Huckstering is good for Dominica -- and the region. There is a lot of unemployment and hucksters, we feed the French (in Guadeloupe)." She feels the people of Guadeloupe should be more appreciative of the contributions hucksters make to their society.

Individual conscientization of the contribution these traders make however is insufficient to ensure its survival. While there is widespread realization in Caribbean society that many people procure a livelihood from the trade and hence it must be supported, this realization is not paralleled with a conscientization that the trade should also be supported because it makes a contribution to

regional development and integration. Development in the region has not been conceived around local informal activities and until it is the trade will not be supported and encouraged from all sides. Perhaps alternative ways of thinking and acting will emerge from this crisis and these will in turn benefit those, like hucksters and traffickers, who offer a pillar of hope for the region. Unfortunately it is more likely that the crisis will result in the adoption of more desperate strategies to attract international capital in the continuing effort to "develop" towards a Western ideal. As suggested by Thomas (1988), the ultimate testament of this reality was revealed in the appeal of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent in his opening address to the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference in July 1987:

Let us invite Canada, the United States and those countries of Europe which have historical links to the Caribbean to put together a development plan for this region to be called the Columbus Plan, to be launched on the anniversary date of the first landing of Christopher Columbus in this hemisphere. (370)

AFTERWORD

Feminist Political Economy and its Potential for Social Science Research

Feminist political economy is a relatively new area of research in the social sciences which presents new challenges to researchers, whether feminist or not. As a research framework it makes significant contributions to the study of gender and development issues.

A major strength of feminist political economy research is that it strives to render political economy accountable to the Third World and Third World women's reality. Feminist political economy is distinct from other theoretical frameworks for research in the social sciences because it is critical and weary of assumptions and theories about the nature of societies or peoples. Its point of departure is the challenging of eurocentric and androcentric biases that have misinformed or distorted our understanding of Third World society and gender relations. It is committed to drawing local knowledges out from under dominant systems of thought and using this knowledge to gain insight into Third World reality. Therefore it provides a valuable method of analysis for the study of Third World women and lends itself to interactive participatory research methodologies.

The task of rescuing local knowledges was particularly difficult in the Caribbean where Western values and culture are so ingrained into the lives and aspirations of the people. This research therefore examined to what extent Western discourse has penetrated Caribbean society and what effect this has had on the region's course of development.

Feminist political economy presents numerous methodological challenges for researchers who use it as an analytical framework. Though the framework encourages one to stand back from dominant systems of meaning, individual researchers are subjective individuals with their own values, assumptions and ideologies. A major challenge for feminist political economists therefore is to confront our own biases and allow them to be challenged by the reality that presents itself.

When I began my field work in the Caribbean, I was determined to be critical of Western and androcentric notions that have often led to misconceptions of Caribbean women's reality. However, in my efforts to prevent these values from obscuring my understanding, I imposed my own set of equally misleading assumptions on these women's lives. For example, I arrived in the region expecting to meet a marginalized group of poor women with low self esteem. For a long time it bothered me that none of the women I met seemed to fit this "model." I also assumed that most of the women would be heads of households. When women began

telling me that they had been happily married for twenty or thirty years I kept insisting that they were rare exceptions. Similarly my initial intentions for this research were to focus solely on the traders' experiences as mothers, wives and household heads. However, as I became more involved with the women, it became increasingly difficult to isolate these issues from other aspects of their lives. It was not until individual traders expressed their dissatisfaction regarding other feminist researchers, who had their own research agenda in mind, that I realized that I was guilty of the same actions. I was falling into the trap of compartmentalizing women's lives, defining their existence in terms of gender roles, and imposing my preconceived notions on their reality.

From that point on, I assumed a new approach. Having been confronted with my own "feminist" biases, I resolved that, as much as possible, I would attempt to see and understand these women's lives as they do and let my analyses be informed by the reality experienced by them. What comes forward therefore, are the commonalities in their women's lives, but also the individual differences. In the case of this research, this type of analysis was possible only through interactive, participatory research methods. Research undertaken in this manner is valuable in any area of the social sciences. For researchers in development

studies it is crucial if development is to truly reflect the interests and world views of Third World people.

Feminist political economy research also adds an important human element to the study of political economy, challenging notions that the household, gender relations and women's activities, such as those in the informal sector, are outside of political economy. Recognizing gender as an integral element of history and political economy deepens our understanding of these disciplines.

This research has shown that changes in the international political economy have a direct bearing on people's lives. While it is well documented how Caribbean countries have responded to changes in the international economy, only recently has the link between the international economy and the household been explored. Throughout Caribbean history, the nature of women's work, women's control over their bodies, and even their relationships with men have been manipulated by the interests of international capital. Feminist political economy research, makes this important connection.

Women however should not be viewed as passive victims of these changes. As this research has shown, Caribbean women were instrumental in destabilizing the plantation system through birth strikes during slavery, and are largely responsible for maintaining a diversified local crop structure and a regional food system, in spite of the

predominance of monocrop agriculture in the region. Amidst the current crisis, their survival strategies may point the way to alternative development planning which can transform the region's insertion into the international economy.

Feminist political economy research inserts this element of human agency into the discourse on international development and political economy to illustrate that just as the international economy has an impact on the lives of people such as hucksters, people, through their actions, also have the potential to impact the international economy.

In summary, feminist political economy research charts new areas in social science research. First, feminist political economy researchers contribute to the humanizing of the social sciences through qualitative research methods which uncover the human reality often lost behind a maze of statistics.

Second, it contributes to a more unified social science wherein politics is not separated from economics, anthropology, history or women's studies. This research does not confine itself to a particular discipline within the social sciences. From the outset, I endeavoured to take a multidisciplinary approach to this research in order to generate an holistic understanding of these women's lives.

Third, by questioning the theories, values and ideologies that are found within many disciplines in the social sciences, feminist political economy research

contributes to the evolution of these disciplines. For example many feminist political economists are engaged in the review, and reinterpretation of history. This research rescues the history of women who have traded agricultural produce for centuries in the Caribbean yet whose role and contribution have been marginalized in historical accounts. A reinterpretation of their history reveals their activities as having contributed significantly to the development of the region. Furthermore giving voice to their experiences both historically and in the present uncovers new areas of Caribbean history. Such an analysis counters the negative image that has been projected on these women and engenders optimism for future praxis.

Overall, feminist political economy, by introducing new conceptual tools and methods for analysis, and questioning and challenging dominant epistemologies, paves the way for more socially responsible, human-centred research in social science.

APPENDIX 1

Trader Profiles

Most of the information presented in the following chapters was gathered from personal interviews and interaction with these traders. It is important therefore first to profile briefly who these women are. Reference is made to some women more than others in the case study. This is because some women shared more information with me than others or we had the opportunity to talk at length. The actual names of all the women have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

The Traffickers of St. Vincent

Clarissa

Clarissa is a 35 year old energetic woman. She is a Vincentian who lives in the town of Rose Hall. She has been trading for about two years now but does not consider herself a "big" trader as she says. She has a large family -- six children ranging from infancy to teenage years. Clarissa explained to me that she is not married but she has a male friend. He however does not support her or her children. She was emphatic in telling me that "he comes by me when I want him to and not when he feels to do so himself."

Clarissa is mainly involved in the trade to Barbados. She trades mangoes most often. Like many Vincentian

traffickers Clarissa usually ships her produce to Barbados and sells through an agent there. Travelling is difficult because of her small children. She is not a member of the Traffickers Small Business Association and does not intend to join.

Bertha

Bertha is considered a veteran trader. She has been trading for 9 years from St. Vincent to Trinidad and is very proud of her work. Bertha lives in the Mount Grenan area of St. Vincent. She is in her late forties or early fifties and has ten children and fourteen grandchildren. She showed me pictures of two of her daughters who live abroad. She is married and her husband farms and contributes to family income. Bertha says that her husband does not take much interest in her work however. The family has quite a large truck so it would appear that they have done well for themselves. Bertha's children are all grown so they do not need looking after while she is away. She mentions that she has weekends free to spend with her husband.

Bertha has been trading for nine years to Trinidad. She mostly sells coconuts and provisions. She considers herself a good trader and says even though traders are not making as much money as they used to in Trinidad she still makes money because she knows how to sell.

Bertha belongs to the Traffickers Small Business Association and in fact was elected to the Board of

Directors the day I spoke with her. With her experience she can make a valuable contribution to the organization.

Evelyn

Evelyn describes herself as being from the country. She is from the Windward side of the island, likely Charlotte District. She is in her mid-forties and has been married for fifteen years. Her husband helps her with her business. She has five children. Her oldest is nineteen and lives with her brother in Canada.

Evelyn has been trading to Trinidad for eight years. She has really felt the difference in income since the devaluation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar in 1988. She earns less now so living is more difficult.

Evelyn is interested in penetrating new markets up the islands if they can be opened. Perhaps then there would be a chance to make more money. Basically, survival is the name of the game for her. She says trafficking is very hard work but it is what she does to live.

Nellie

Nellie is a woman in her mid-forties who has been trading both inter-island and internally in St. Vincent for many years. Trafficking has brought her considerable prosperity and success.

Nellie explained that she came from a very poor family in St. Vincent and had to become independent at the age of 13 because her father married a woman who was not her

mother, and presumably no longer supported her. Her father lives in Canada now but does not remit money to her. She met her husband at age 13 and they had their first child when Nellie was 14. Consequently Nellie dropped out of school. She has been with her husband now for 31 years. They have been married for 17 years. Nellie and her husband have five children, one daughter and four sons.

Nellie has been trafficking for "a long time now" as many of the traders say. She used to trade to Barbados and Trinidad but now trades between St. Vincent and St. Martin. She trades mostly coconuts, eddoes, plantains and other provisions but she told me that she cannot take too much because of import restrictions. She usually makes the trip to St. Martin twice a month and stays for approximately five days each time.

Sometimes Nellie will buy clothes and other items in St. Martin and sell these at home in her market booth or in the street. Other times she will simply change her money in St. Vincent. Occasionally Nellie will go on buying trips to Marguerita to buy clothes to sell. Nellie has had her market booth for four years. She buys mostly groceries from wholesalers and sells them in her booth. She pays 85 dollars a month for this booth, considerably more than the other market vendors pay for their stalls. Hence her booth is also a sign of her relative prosperity as compared to the others.

Carol

Carol is a woman in her mid-forties. We met one Monday at the wharf in Kingstown. Carol is a widow of thirteen years. She has nine children none of whom are still school age. She presently resides with her mother in Mesopotamia.

Carol traded to Trinidad and Barbados for eleven years after her cousin encouraged her to take up trafficking. Since the devaluation of the TT dollar however she has been trading to St. Martin. She travels regularly with Nellie. She also ships produce to agents in Barbados.

Laila

Laila is a woman in her late forties who comes from the town of Rose Hall. She has three children and one grandchild. Her husband died three years ago and afterwards she realized she had to make some money to survive. Laila is a woman of all trades -- farmer, local higgler and trafficker. She farms peppers and sweet potatoes on her own five to six acres of land and sells her produce in the internal market in Kingstown on weekends. She also buys mangoes from other farmers to ship to an agent in Barbados. She is hoping the trading situation will improve for traffickers in the near future.

Veronica

Veronica is a woman in her mid-thirties who has been a trafficker for eleven years. She ships produce regularly to Barbados. Like most traders she sells ground provisions and

fruit. She is a single woman and is very suspicious of men's intentions. She is very protective of her interests and her money. Veronica has seven children, six of whom live with her.

Bernice

Bernice is a woman in her mid-forties. She has been trading for several years to Barbados. Before trafficking to Barbados Bernice was one of the many women who sold produce in Trinidad. She switched to Barbados after the decline in the Trinidad markets. Before becoming a trafficker Bernice worked in the post office.

Bernice is not married but told me she has a male friend. She also has one son. Bernice presently resides in the same yard as her mother and brothers. She and her brothers are active ICI traders. They sell a variety of goods including plasticware and jewelry on a main street in Kingstown.

Iris

Iris has been trafficking to Trinidad for about eight years. She is a young woman in her early thirties. She is unmarried and has five children whom she cares for by herself. She began trafficking with very little money but over the years has been able to establish a comfortable life for herself. These days Iris is occupied with running a small import clothing business but manages to make the trip to sell produce in Trinidad about once a month.

Claudia

Claudia is a woman from Questelles, St. Vincent. She is thirty-six years old, married and has six children. She began trading to Trinidad in 1982 because she and her husband needed a house. She knew quite a bit about the trade because her mother and sister were also traffickers. Claudia only traded for one and a half years. She cares a great deal about her community and about the status of women in her society. She is a member of the National Council for Women in St. Vincent, helping to help women move forward in her country. She also engages in some artisan work for money.

Martha

Martha is an older woman, likely in her late 50s or 60s, who trades produce internally in St. Vincent. She has been trading in the Central Market at the same stall for the last 10 years. Presently Martha lives in Sion Hill which is an area just outside of Kingstown. She has six children and seven grandchildren many of whom live with her. She also has an adopted daughter who she explained was the granddaughter of a woman who used to trade in the market.

Martha is not married. She said that many men here are very untrustworthy. She said they do not keep promises and while they are with you they may be "checking" other women at the same time.

Martha has traded in the market for ten years, at the same stall. Prior to this she used to vend in the streets selling sweets, puddings etc. She explained how she would carry a tray and roam all about town. But once all the children came she had to slow down her life.

The Dominican Hucksters

Althea

Althea is a woman who was introduced to me outside her roadside stall in Roseau. She is in her mid-forties and lives in a middle to upper class area of Dominica, Goodwill. She was born in Dominica and is an only child. She has been married for 30 years and she and her husband have five children ranging in age from 28 to 20. Two of the children are married and live outside the home; three are still at home. She also has grandchildren. Althea's husband works in shipping.

Althea enjoys being a huckster and says she cannot see herself doing anything else. She began trading ten years ago. She started by trading for other hucksters and minding their stalls. These hucksters would pay her for her service. With this money she started trading on her own. At first she would buy grapefruits and other fruit in the country in Dominica and sell these in Guadeloupe but she found she was not making enough profit. With the money she made she would buy goods and sell them at home. Eventually she moved into "informal commercial importing" where she

mostly buys outside the Dominica and sells in Dominica. She presently travels to St. Martin, Puerto Rico and Venezuela about every two months on buying trips.

Corinne

Corinne is an active and long time huckster. She has been trading for 28 years and works virtually every day of the week. She has an extremely positive outlook on life. Corinne comes from a poor Dominican family. She grew up in the country.

Corinne is in her mid-forties and has been with her husband since she was eighteen. Presently she and her husband have eight children. Corinne told me she had twelve pregnancies, but had one miscarriage and three abortions.

She presently trades in Guadeloupe but has also traded in Trinidad and Antigua. I met Corinne on a Saturday morning. She had returned from Guadeloupe the night before and was selling from her van in the Roseau market. On Sundays Corinne buys citrus, breadfruit, spice, and other items from the country and sells them in Guadeloupe from Monday to Friday. In Guadeloupe she buys garlic, onions, potatoes, cloves, and other items such as plasticware, wine, and macaroni and sells them in Roseau. She has a steady flow of customers. She has developed into a successful trader. She says to be a successful huckster you must have a lot of patience and love. Corinne clearly demonstrates these characteristics in all her dealings with customers.

Joyce

Joyce is Corinne's oldest daughter. She is twenty two years old and has been trading for about three years. She trades like her mother to Guadeloupe though they sell in different markets. Joyce travels almost every week. She trades a variety of produce including limes, plaintains, and grapefruits.

Joyce is single and has one son, Adrian who is four years old. He is cared for much of the time by Corinne and her other daughters.

Joyce loves the trade for the financial as well as the social aspect. She is not the type of woman who could sit in an office behind a desk.

Phyllis

Phyllis is a quiet older woman in her early sixties from Grand Bay, Dominica. She has been trading for forty years. Over the years she has traded to many places, including Trinidad, Barbados and Guadeloupe. I met her on one of her rare trips to Guadeloupe. She only travels once every six months these days, whenever she needs something at home. While she used to sell produce today she carries light weight baskets and straw hats to sell in Guadeloupe and returns home with any consumer durables she may need.

Phyllis is married and has eight children, most of whom live abroad. Her husband is a farmer. She told me that when she became a huckster there was little else she could

do. Now she has successfully educated her children and her son Rawle has even taken after her as a huckster.

Cathy Ann

Cathy Ann is a woman in her early thirties. She has been a huckster for three years. She sells her produce in Guadeloupe and travels every three weeks. She has been married to her husband who is a police officer for a year and a half. She also has two children. She has some family in Guadeloupe which makes her trading easier. When she is not huckstering Cathy Ann enjoys dancing, swimming, and growing her own flowers.

Esther

Esther is Joyce's cousin and Corinne's niece. She is in her mid thirties and lives with her boyfriend in Dominica. They also farm bananas on their land. Esther has been trading for fifteen years between Dominica and Guadeloupe. She loves being a huckster and says she would not give it up for any other type of work. She loves the independence and the income it has provided her. Unfortunately I had little opportunity to chat with Esther because she was sick for much of the time.

Jackie

Jackie is a young woman from Marigot, Dominica. She clearly loves her work as a huckster. She has been trading for ten years in Guadeloupe. Jackie has been married for ten years and has three children aged fourteen, ten, and

six. Unfortunately her relationship with her husband is poor and she is eager to leave him. Huckstering is her reprieve from the tense situation in her household.

Jackie is very proud of the work she does and is aware of the contribution hucksters make to their society. She is a member of the organization. She is also hoping to do some extra travelling outside the region to do some ICI trading.

Dalia

Dalia is a long time trader who was the first and current president of the Dominica Hucksters' Association. She is also one of the founders of the DHA. She invited me to her home several times. She has been married for 39 years and has eight grown children. One of her daughters is currently working on staff at the DHA. She presently cares for two of her grandchildren in her home while their mothers are abroad working. Dalia trades principally to Guadeloupe though she travels less frequently these days. She is busy running two shops she has in Dominica. Her husband plays a very supportive role in her life. Dalia is very thankful for the way he managed the household while she was away trading in her early days as a huckster.

Presently Dalia spends a great deal of her time encouraging members of the DHA to become more involved and supportive of the organization. She would like to step down in the near future but there does not seem to be anyone with the same commitment as her to take over.

Barbara and Dione

Barbara and Dione are a mother and daughter trading team from Grand Bay. Barbara has been trading for ten years and Dione for only two years. Barbara was very happy when Dione decided to become a trader because now she has company on her journeys. She has one other daughter and three sons.

The two women sell produce as well as flowers in Guadeloupe. Barbara's husband is a farmer and grow the flowers which they sell. The trade has provided them with a steady income though they do not much enjoy the hard work and hustling.

Rita

Rita is a huckster who lives in Portsmouth, a fairly large town in the northwest corner of Dominica. She is a long time trader. When I first met her she was campaigning for Eugenia Charles in the upcoming election.

Rita has always lived in Portsmouth. She is forty-five years old and has been married twice. She had six children with her first husband by the time she was 26 years old -- four boys and two girls. She is married again but has no children with this man.

Rita has been trading for twenty years. She trades to St. Martin and Antigua mostly. She goes every week and buys many things to sell in her shop upon her return. She has had her shop for about four years. She sells alcohol and

other items like custard, prunes, macaroni, and potato chips -- mostly products unavailable or expensive in Dominica.

Rita is an active member of the DHA. She is in fact one of the officers of the organization which means that she approves members.

Alicia

Alicia is a woman in her mid-thirties. We met on the boat trip to Guadeloupe from Roseau. Alicia is from the country near Portsmouth. She is not married and has no children though her sister's two children live with her. Alicia began trading in the 1970s to Guadeloupe. She stopped for sometime and lived and worked in Guadeloupe for several years. While there she sold BBQ chicken to earn money. She has taken up huckstering again but supplements her income with some sewing and still sells BBQ chicken. Ultimately Alicia wants to open a snack bar in Dominica.

Margaret

Margaret is a woman who lives in Portsmouth, Dominica. I dropped by her home one day to speak with her and found her to be taking a nap. She woke up however and we chatted. Margaret is forty seven years old and has six children. She has cared for six more children in her household at one time however. She has been married to her husband for thirty years.

Margaret has been a huckster since 1974 when her husband took ill and could not work. Since then she has

supported her household. She trades on a regular basis to St. Martin. She enjoys the travelling and even though she has a shop to tend as well, she would rather hire someone to mind the shop and do the travelling herself.

Velma

Velma is known to be one of Dominica's finest hucksters. She lives in Portsmouth in a large home with her mother and some of her grandchildren. She is in her mid forties and is unmarried at present but was married some years ago. She has been trading to Antigua and St. Martin for eighteen years. She told me that during mango season she travels every week. She learned her skills as a huckster from her mother who used to trade also. She presently ships more produce than other hucksters on her trading trips. She provided me with interesting information about the way traders used to be and the way they are now.

Three other Dominican women, Yvonne, Kathryn and Allison, and two other Vincentian women, Dolores and Florabelle are mentioned briefly in the case study. None of these women were interviewed extensively however.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Accosta, Yvonne & Jean Casimir. 1985. "Plantation Systems in St. Lucia." *Gomes* 34-59.
- Addo, Herb. ed. 1985. Development as Social Transformation. Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton.
- . 1985. "Beyond Eurocentricity: Transformation and Transformational Responsibility." *Addo* 12-48.
- Amin, Samir. 1989. Eurocentrism. New York: Monthly Review P.
- Antrobus, Peggy. 1985. Caribbean Women and Development. Barbados: Caribbean Women's Features Syndicate/WAND.
- . 1989. "Gender Implications of the Development Crisis." *Beckford & Girvan* 145-161.
- . 1990. "Structural Adjustment -- Cure or Curse? Implications for Caribbean Development." Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs 16.1: 1-8.
- Aseniero, George. 1985. "A Reflection on Developmentalism: From Development to Transformation." *Addo* 48-86.
- Auger, R., Gordon, S., & M. Reckford. 1961. The Making of the West Indies. London: Longmans.
- Bairoch, P. 1973. Urban Unemployment in Developing Countries: The Nature of the Problem and Proposals for its Solution. Geneva: ILO.
- Bandarage, Ashoka. 1984. "Women in Development: Liberalism, Marxism and Marxist-Feminism." Development and Change 15: 495-515.
- Barrow, Christine. 1988. "Anthropology, the Family and Women in the Caribbean." *Mohammed & Shepherd* 156-170.
- Barry, Tom, Wood, Beth & Deb Preusch. 1984. The Other Side of Paradise. New York: Grove.
- Beckford, George. 1972. Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World. New York: Oxford UP.

- Beckford, George & Norman Girvan. eds. 1989. Development in Suspense: Selected Papers and Proceedings of the First Conference of Caribbean Economists. Kingston: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Association of Caribbean Economists.
- Bell, Jeanette. 1986. "Women and Entrepreneurship." Ellis 47-50.
- Bellon, S. 1988. "Elements of the Agrarian History of Dominica" Caribbean Agricultures and Development. Guadeloupe: Developpement Agricole Cariabe. 1-22.
- Best, Lloyd. 1968. "A Model of Pure Plantation Economy." Social and Economic Studies 17: 283-326.
- Beneria, Lourdes & Gita Sen. 1981. "Accumulation, Reproduction, and Women's Role in Economic Development: Boserup Revisited." Signs 7.2: 279-298.
- Beneria, Lourdes and Martha Roldan. 1987. The Crossroads of and Class and Gender. Chicago: U of Chicago P.
- Boserup, Ester. 1970. Women's Role in Economic Development. New York: St. Martin's P.
- Boserup, Ester & Christina Liljencrantz. 1975. Integration of Women in Development. Washington: UNDP.
- Bienefeld, Manfred. 1981. "The Informal Sector and Women's Oppression" IDS Bulletin 12(3): 8-13.
- Brereton, Bridget. 1988. "General Problems and Issues in Studying the History of Women." Mohammed and Shepherd 123-42.
- Brierley, John & Hymie Rubenstein. 1988. Small Farming and Peasant Resources in the Caribbean. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba.
- Brodber, Erna. 1986. "Afro-Jamaican Women at the Turn of the Century." Social and Economic Studies 35: 23-50.
- Bromley R. and C. Gerry eds. 1979. Casual Work and Poverty in Third World Cities. Wiley (no city given).
- Buehl, Susan. 1990. "Inter-Island Marketing - Dominica to Antigua." Focus Jan-Mar: 10.

- Bush, Barbara. 1985. "Towards Emancipation: Slave Women and Resistance to Coercive Labour Regimes in the British West Indian Colonies, 1790-1838." Abolition and its Aftermath. ed. David Richardson. London: Frank Cass. 27-54.
- CAFRA. 1988. "Overall Report and Summary of Main Findings." Women in Caribbean Agriculture Research/Action Project.
- Caribbean Economic Handbook. 1985. London: Euromonitor.
- Caribbean Economic Handbook. 1989. London: Euromonitor.
- Carmichael, Mrs. 1969. (original 1833). Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies. New York: Negro Universities P, 1969. Vol 1.
- Clarke, Roberta. 1985. "Dim Light at the End of the Tunnel: A Critique of The Integration of Women in Development Approach." Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs 11.2: 51-60.
- Committee for Development of Women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. 1984. "Women in Agriculture: Carriers of a Heavy Load." Pamphlet, St. Vincent.
- Cuales, Sonia & Monique Lagro. 1987. Women Traders in Agricultural Produce. Port of Spain: ECLAC.
- . 1989. "The Informal Sector and Women in the Caribbean: Notes for Reflection." Discussion Paper for the Consultation on Curriculum Development in Women's Studies held at the University of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana. May 1-5.
- Chase, Vasantha. 1988. "The Economic and Social Context." Caribbean Women in Agriculture. Santiago: FAO, 27-38.
- Clarendon, Hannah. 1986. "The Hucksters of Dominica." Ellis 56-61.
- Craton, Michael. 1978. Searching for the Invisible Man: Slave and Plantation Life in Jamaica. Boston: Harvard UP.
- Deere, Carmen Diana et al. 1990. In the Shadows of the Sun: Caribbean Development Alternative and U.S. Policy. Boulder: Westview P.

- Diamond, Irene & Lee Quinby. 1988. "Introduction." Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance. eds. Irene Diamond & Lee Quinby. Boston: North Eastern UP. ix-ixx.
- Durant-Gonzalez. 1983. "The Occupation of Higglering." Jamaica Journal 16.3: 2-12.
- ECLAC. 1985. Social Structural Changes in Dominica. Port of Spain: ECLAC.
- . 1988. Report on the Advisory Group Meeting on Women Traders in the Caribbean. Port of Spain: ECLAC.
- Edwards, Melvin, R. 1980. Jamaican Higglers: Their Significance and Potential. Swansea: Centre for Development Studies, University College of Swansea.
- Ellis, Pat, ed. 1986. Women in the Caribbean. London: Zed P.
- Fraser, Peter. 1985. "The Caribbean in a World Context" Caribbean Economic Handbook. London: Euromonitor. 1-19.
- Ford-Smith, Honor. 1986. "Caribbean Women and Social Change: Some Aspects of Our History." Wedderburn 152-74.
- Geiger, Susan N.G. 1986. "Women's Life Histories: Method and Content." Signs 11.2: 334-51.
- Gill, Margaret. 1984. "Women, Work and Development: Barbados 1946-1970." Women, Work and Development. ed. Patricia Anderson. Barbados: ISER. 1-31.
- Girvan, Norman and Owen Jefferson eds. 1984. Readings in the Political Economy of the Caribbean. Kingston: New World Group.
- Girvan, Norman P. 1988. "Notes on the Meaning and Significance of Development." Mohammed and Shepherd 10-21.
- Gomes, P.I., ed. 1985. Rural Development in the Caribbean. Kingston: Heinemann Education Books.
- Gonsalves, Ralph. 1989. "Banana Industry in Trouble: Its Present and Future." Movement for National Unity Educational Pamphlet. Kingstown.

- Gonzalez, Nancie, L. 1970. "Toward a Definition of Matrifocality." Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives. ed. Norman E. Whitten and John F. Szwed. New York: The Free Press. 231-244.
- Gordon, Derek. "Women, Work and Social Mobility in Post-War Jamaica." Hart 67-81.
- Harding, Sandra. 1987. "Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method?" Feminism and Methodology. ed. Sandra Harding. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1-14.
- Harker, Trevor. 1989. "The Caribbean in the Context of the Global Crisis." Beckford & Girvan 11-34.
- Hart, Keith. 1973. "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana." Journal of Modern Studies 11.1.
- , ed. 1989. Women and the Sexual Division of Labour in the Caribbean. Kingston: Consortium Graduate School of Social Sciences.
- . 1989. "The Sexual Division of Labour." Hart 9-29.
- Henry, Chris. 1990. "Higglers." Caribbean Week 2-8 June: 5.
- Henry, Ralph. 1988. "Jobs, Gender and Development Strategy in the Caribbean." Mohammed & Shepherd 183-206.
- Hewitt, Linda. 1987. "The Participation of Women in the Labour Market." Human Resource Development Conference, Trinidad and Tobago.
- Heyser, Noeleen. 1981. "Towards a Framework for Analysis." IDS Bulletin 12.3: 3-7.
- Higman, Barry. Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807 -1834. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1984.
- Holder, Yvonne. 1986. Women Traders in Guyana. Port of Spain: UNECLAC.
- Homiak, John. "The Hucksters of Dominica." Grassroots Development 10.1. 30-37.
- Howe, Lynn. 1990. "The Use of the Life History Method: Refining Feminist Research." Term paper for Geography 45.544, Carleton University.

- Honeychurch, Lennox. The Dominica Story. Roseau: The Dominica Institute, 1984.
- Isaac, Annette. 1986. "Women in Small-Scale Economic Enterprises." Ellis 51-55.
- Jaggar, Alison M. 1983. Feminist Politics and Human Nature. Tctowa: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Jaquette, Jane S. 1982. "Women and Modernization Theory: A Decade of Feminist Criticism." World Politics 34: 267-84.
- Joseph, Cecil. 1990. "DHA Credit Programme." Focus Jan-Mar: 22.
- Joseph, Cecil, & Jerry La Gra. 1990. "Trafficking from St. Vincent Is there a Future in it?" Focus Jan-Mar: 9-10.
- Joslin, William. "US AID Director Likens Situation Facing Business Sector Today to that of 1838" Money Index 202 Dec 19, 1989: 30-1.
- Klein, Renate Duelli. 1983. "How to do what we want to do: thought about feminist methodology." Bowles & Klein 88-104.
- Lagro, Monique. 1988 Women Traders in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Port of Spain: ECLAC.
- . 1988. Women Traders in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Port of Spain: UNECLAC.
- . 1990. The Hucksters of Dominica. Port of Spain: UNECLAC. Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee.
- Lagro, Monique & Donna Plotkin. 1990. The Agricultural Traders of St. Vincent and The Grenadines, Grenada, Dominica and St. Lucia. Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee. Port of Spain: UNECLAC.
- Langness, L.L. 1965. The Life History In Anthrological Science. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- LeFranc, Elsie. 1988. "Higglering In Jamaica: Entrepreneurs of Traditional Small-Scale Operators." Caribbean Review 16: 15-35.
- Leighton, Larry. 1990. "ISCFO and Inter-Island Trade." Focus Jan-Mar: 1-2.

- Levin, Daniel. 1986. "Susu." Caribbean Review 7.1: 19-23.
- Lewis, W., Arthur. 1950. The Industrialization of the British West Indies. reprint, Barbados: Government Printing Office.
- Lobdell, Richard. 1986. "Women in the Jamaican Labour Force, 1881-1921." Paper presented to Symposium on Caribbean Economic History. Mona, Jamaica.
- Maguire, Patricia. 1984. Women in Development: An Alternative Analysis. Amherst: Center for International Education.
- Maharaj, Niala. 1988. "Fly-by-Night Female Traders of the Caribbean Islands: Do they hold the Key to Regional Integration?" Women in Action 2: 10-11.
- Marshall, Woodville. 1985. "Peasant Development in the West Indies since 1838." Gomes 1-14.
- Massiah, Jocelyn, ed. 1986. Women in the Caribbean Project. Barbados: Institute for Social and Economic Research.
- . 1989. "Women's Lives and Livelihoods: A View from the Commonwealth Caribbean." World Development 17.7: 965-79.
- Mathurin, Lucille. 1975. "The Arrival of Black Women." Jamaica Journal 9.2 & 3: 2.
- Max-Neef, Manfred A. 1982. From the Outside Looking In: Experiences in 'Barefoot Economics'. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjold Foundation.
- McAfee, Kathy. 1990. "Dominica: Privitize and Pauperize." Nacla 23.5: 33-39.
- Mies, Maria. 1983. "Towards methodology for feminist research." Bowles & Klein 117-139.
- Mintz, Sydney. 1971. Caribbean Transformations. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- . 1985. "From Plantations to Peasantries in the Caribbean." Caribbean Contours ed. Sydney Mintz & Sally Price. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. 127-155.

- Mohammed, Patricia & Catherine Shepherd. eds. 1988. Gender in Caribbean Development. Mona, Jamaica: U of West Indies.
- Mohammed, Patricia. 1988. "The Caribbean Family Revisited." Mohammed & Shepherd 170-183.
- Molyneux, Maxine. 1985. "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, The State, and Revolution in Nicaragua." Feminist Studies 11.2: 227-254.
- Momsen, Janet Henshall. 1988. "Changing Gender Roles in Caribbean Peasant Agriculture." Small Farming and Peasant Resources in the Caribbean. ed. John S. Brierley and Hymie Rubenstein. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba. 83-101.
- Moser, Caroline O.N. 1978. "Informal Sector or Petty Commodity Production: Dualism or Dependence in Urban Development?" World Development 6.9&10: 1041-64.
- . "Women, Human Settlements, and Housing: A Conceptual Framework for Analysis and Policy-Making." Women, Human Settlements and Housing. eds. Caroline Moser & Linda Peake. London: Tavistock. 12-32.
- Nurse, Keith. 1991. "The Developmental Role of Export-Oriented Industrialization in the New International Division of Labour: The Case of CARICOM Countries." Phd dissertation. Trinidad: University of the West Indies.
- Nurse, Lawrence. 1986. "Organized Labour in the Commonwealth Caribbean." Wedderburn 119-152.
- Parry, J.H. & P.M. Sherlock. 1971. A Short History of the West Indies. London: Macmillan.
- Phillips, Daphne. 1985. Women Traders of Trinidad and Tobago. Port of Spain: UNECLAC.
- Phillips, Peter. 1989. "Comment." Beckford & Girvan 34-48.
- Ramsaran, Ramesh. 1988. "Industrialization and Development: The Commonwealth Caribbean Experience." Rethinking Caribbean Development. eds. G. Schuyler & H. Vetmeyer. Nova Scotia: International Education Centre. 75-87.
- Reddock, Rhoda. 1980. "Industrialization and the Rise of

- the Petty Bourgeoisie in Trinidad and Tobago." MSc Thesis, The Hague: Institute for Social Studies.
- . 1985. "Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective." Latin American Perspective 12.1: 66-80.
- . 1986. "Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago. 1845-1917: Freedom Denied." Caribbean Quarterly 32.3&4: 27-50.
- . 1988. "Women and the Slave Plantation Economy in the Caribbean (with special reference to Trinidad and Tobago): Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. draft of paper published in Women in History: Changing Perceptions. ed. Marsha Cameron. Paris: UNESCO, 1989.
- . 1989. "Historical and Contemporary Perspectives: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago." Hart 47-67.
- Riviera, Marcia. 1989. "Women in the Caribbean Underground Economy." Beckford & Girvan 161-171.
- Rogers, Barbara. 1979. The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Countries. London: Tavistock.
- Roberts, George, W. 1957. The Population of Jamaica. London: Cambridge UP.
- Rubenstein, Hymie. 1977. "Economic History and Population Movements in an Eastern Caribbean Valley." Ethnohistory 24.1: 19-45.
- . 1987. Coping with Poverty: Adaptive Strategies in a Caribbean Village. Boulder: Westview.
- Schlegel, Alice. 1977. "Toward a Theory of Sexual Stratification." Sexual Stratification. ed. Alice Schlegel. New York: Columbia UP. 1-40.
- Scott, James C. 1985. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Sen, Gita & Caren Grown. 1987. Development, Crises, Alternative Visions. New York: Monthly Review P.
- SEWA. 1982. We the Self-Employed. Ahmedabad: SEWA.
- Sewell, William. 1968. (original 1861). The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies. New York: Augustus M. Kelly.

- Shephard, Charles. 1971. (original, 1831) An Historical Account of the Island of St. Vincent. London: Frank Cass & Co.
- Simmonds, Lorna. 1987. "Slave Higglering in Jamaica 1780-1834." Jamaica Journal 20.1: 31-38.
- Sistren. 1988. "Women Traders of the Caribbean: Making an Important Contribution to National Economies." SISTREN Women at Work 10.2&3: 31.
- Smith, Michael, G. 1973. "A Survey of West Indian Family Studies." Work and Family Life: West Indian Perspectives. ed. Lambros Comitas and David Lowenthal. Garden City: Anchor. 365-407.
- South Commission, The. 1990. The Challenge to the South. New York: Oxford UP.
- Spinelli, Joseph. 1974. Land Use and Population in St. Vincent 1763-1960: A Contribution to the Study of the Patterns of Economic and Demographic Change in a Small West Indian Island. Phd dissertation, U of Florida.
- Stamp, Patricia. 1989. Technology, Gender, and Power in Africa. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- Staudt, Kathleen. 1986. "Women, Development and the State: On the Theoretical Impasse." Development and Change. 17. 325-33.
- Stone, Carl. 1986. Power in the Caribbean Basin. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Stubbs, Jean. 1984. "Some thoughts on the Life Story Method in Labour History and Research on Rural Women." IDS Bulletin 15.1: 34-37.
- Sunshine, Cathy. 1985. The Caribbean: Survival, Struggle and Sovereignty. Washington D.C.: EPICA.
- . 1988. The Caribbean: Survival, Struggle and Sovereignty. Washington D.C.: EPICA.
- Taylor, Alicia. 1988. Women Traders in Jamaica: The Informal Commercial Importer. Port of Spain: ECLAC.
- Thomas, Clive. 1988. The Poor and the Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean. New York: Monthly Review P.

- Tinker, I. & Bramsen, M. 1976. Women and World Development. Washington D.C.: Overseas Development Council.
- Traffickers Small Business Association. 1990. "Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period September 01, 1988 to December 31, 1989."
- UNECLAC. 1988. Women in the Inter-Island Trade in Agricultural Produce in the Eastern Caribbean. Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin American and the Caribbean, Guatemala City, Guatemala. Port of Spain: UNECLAC.
- Watts, Michael. 1989. "The Agrarian Crisis in Africa: Debating the Crisis." Progress in Human Geography 15.1: 1-41.
- Wedderburn, Judith. 1986. A Caribbean Reader on Development. Kingston: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Weiller, B, Y. Clavel, J-L. Paul & D. Troalen. 1988. "Elements of the Agrarian History of St. Vincent." Caribbean Agricultures and Development. Guadeloupe: Development Agricoles Caraibes. 33-49.
- Williams, Eric. 1970. From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969. London: Andre Deutch Ltd.
- Wiltshire-Brodber, Rosina. 1988. "Gender, Race and Class in the Caribbean." Mohammed and Shepherd 142-156.
- Young, Kate 1987-8. "Reflections on Meeting Women's Needs." Draft Paper Mimeo.
- . 1988. "Gender and Development: A Relational Approach." Sussex: IDS. mimeo

END

28·05·92

FIN