Document généré le 25 avr. 2024 09:02

Les Cahiers du Gres

Les Cahiers du Gres
Série Diversité urbaine
Groupe de Recherche Ethnicité et Société

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Volume 5, numéro 1, printemps 2005

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/010879ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/010879ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Groupe de Recherche Ethnicité et Société
CEETUM

ISSN

1499-0431 (imprimé)
1499-044X (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Seller, R. (2005). ‘Out of State’ but still in Mind: Family Love and the Cultural Context of Migration in Dominica, Eastern Caribbean. *Les Cahiers du Gres*, *5*(1), 43–59. https://doi.org/10.7202/010879ar

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'Out of state' but still in mind: Family love and the cultural context of migration in Dominica, Eastern Caribbean

Robbyn Seller

Abstract/Résumé

Migration in Dominica is intricately linked to the cultural configuration of mainly kin-based affective and economic relationships that developed historically within the context of slavery and afterwards. This configuration includes the adoption of **multiple strategies** for making a living; **wide lateral networks of kin** that can be called upon if needed; a **support system** among close relatives for childcare and economic assistance/maintenance (remittances); and **cultural values** that promote and sustain the support system. It is suggested that in addition to their role in building economic support, networks across borders are driven by relations of affect based on a culturally particular notion of 'love'.

La migration en Dominique est intrinsèquement liée à la configuration culturelle des rapports affectifs et économiques, principalement de la parenté, qui se sont développés historiquement dans le contexte d'esclavage. Cette configuration inclut l'adoption de **stratégies multiples** pour gagner sa vie; de **larges réseaux latéraux de parenté**, desquels on peut faire appel au besoin; un **système d'appui** parmi les parents proches pour la garde d'enfants et l'aide économique; et les **valeurs culturelles** qui promeuvent et supportent le système d'appui. Il est suggéré qu'en plus de leur rôle dans la construction du support économique, les réseaux transnationaux soient guidés par les relations d'affect à l'intérieur d'une notion culturellement particulière 'd'amour'.

Key words : Migration, networks, transnationalism, Dominica, Caribbean, kinship, love
Mots clés : Migration, réseaux, transnationalisme, Dominique, Caraïbes, parenté, amour

Nurses at the local health clinic in La Plaine, Dominica (Eastern Caribbean) keep a record of each household in the village, which they update from time to time when they make their rounds. Residents who have left the island are not taken off the list, unlike the deceased; rather, they are given a new designation - "out of state." This label is significant, as it acknowledges the absent person's ongoing participation in the community, a fact that for most constitutes more than simply an adjustment to a written record. It is also significant because it anticipates the

person's return, or at least the maintenance of a strong connection to the village. Additionally, the fact that this designation exists at all imparts normalcy to the situation; some residents are physically present on the island, and others are not but still occupy their place symbolically. What are the motivations for maintaining this connection, how is it maintained, and how do existing cultural schemas resonate with this? Especially, what drives and nurtures the maintenance of these connections, connections to both people and place, conferring to absence such a presence?

Research on migration has uncovered a multitude of factors that favour or promote migration, usually based on the context at hand in the home region, including 'push' factors such as political unrest and war, economic hardship, and the 'pull' of the host country. In this last perspective, choice to migrate can be attributed to the economic, social, and symbolic capital available to people in the country of arrival that provides opportunities and facilitates their adaptation to the host country (Faist, 2000). Migration studies have largely focused on the people migrating, especially their reasons for departure, their insertion to the receiving society, with concern shifting more recently to the ways in which connections with 'home' (Olwig, 1993; Clifford, 1994; Glick Schiller *et al*. 1995; Kearney, 1995; Ho, 1999) and with migrants elsewhere are maintained. Maintaining connections has been facilitated, and importantly, made more visible, by the development of new communications technologies. However, connections with home, through letters and gifts (remittances), have long characterized migrations from the Caribbean, and in Dominica, many still do not have ready access to even a telephone. The questions posed in this paper follow this concern with transnational connections, going beyond questions of urgency and economic need, or communication facility, with a focus on the home country. How does migration 'fit' with local social and cultural relationships and patterns? Is there also a set of economic, social, and symbolic (or cultural) resources that is mobilized at home in the context of migration trajectories? And what role do locally defined relationships and economies, especially the relations of sharing and love, play in these trajectories, especially in the way links between people, as well as between people and place, are maintained across borders?

In the Caribbean, a history of migration both to and from the region has informed social, economic, and cultural development (including local expectations and understandings). Caribbean societies as we know them today developed within and through the expansion of Europe and its economic concerns, as elsewhere in the Americas. Caribbean colonies (at least the smaller British controlled islands) were not so much settler colonies as production units (plantations) for European investors. Labourers who worked the plantations were brought first from

Europe as indentured servants, then from Africa as slaves and finally, after abolition, from Asia and, to a lesser degree, Europe, as indentured labourers once again. While this is common knowledge, it is important to note this inherent and historic mobility as it sets the stage for the kinds of social, family and economic relations that eventually developed in the region.

This paper draws on research carried out on the small island of Dominica, a former British colony located at the centre of the Lesser Antilles, coupled with research on Caribbean migrants in Montreal [1]. Life story interviews with women and participant observation form the basis of the Caribbean research (Seller, 2003). In Montreal, interviews with Dominican women, some of whom are related to informants in the Caribbean research, or from the same village, are part of a larger project on Anglo-Caribbean women in Montreal.

Migration has become an integral part of local life-ways in most countries in the region, and Dominica is no exception, with one of the highest net migration rates in the world (-13.87/ 1000) [2]. Migration stands as one option among others through which it becomes possible to meet economic needs, fulfill familial obligations, and 'improve' one's self, at the same time increasing one's local prestige (through increased economic and symbolic capital). Philpott (1968) has spoken of a 'migrant ideology' described as a "feature of the institutionalization which normally takes place when some usage becomes a persistent multi-generational phenomenon" (Rubenstein, 1982: 20). While the contexts in which migration has occurred have changed and the destinations and goals of migrants have shifted [3], as has their gender over the years [4], migration off the island, characterized by at least the intention to return, has long been integrated into strategies for survival and betterment – socially, symbolically, and economically - for inhabitants of Dominica as elsewhere in the Caribbean (Levine, 1987; Thomas-Hope, 1985; Richardson, 1982; Myers, 1976). Additionally, in any given period, even though differences in goals and experiences of migration may exist, the *fact* of migration remains closely woven into the lives of both people who leave and those who remain, and in their perceptions, norms, and values, including notions and practices of 'love' [5].

In the following, I consider intertwining aspects of the culture of migration in Dominica, perceived historically in the post-emancipation context and as intricately linked to the cultural configuration of mainly kin-based affective and economic relationships. This configuration includes the adoption of **multiple strategies** for making a living; **wide lateral networks of kin** that can be called upon if needed; a **support system** among close relatives for childcare and economic assistance/maintenance (remittances); and **cultural values** that

promote and sustain the support system. This perspective resonates with an 'adaptive response' or 'adaptive strategy' approach favoured by several scholars, in which the flexibility of social relations such as kin networks and support systems in the Caribbean is seen as existing in response to economic conditions to allow the building of economic support (Gussler, 1980; Senior, 1991; Barrow, 1996; Rodman, 1971).

Rodman (1971) proposed four elements of this flexibility in Caribbean kinship relations that facilitate adaptability: a lack of prescriptive kinship ties and obligations; kin relations based on interaction; role interchangeability; and a variety of acceptable patterns of behaviour. The adaptive response approach is conceived of mainly as an economic rationale for social behaviour. But seeing networks and systems of support as economically determined ignores the importance of *affect* in the maintenance of these ties of support and exchange and the manipulation of these ties to express both affection and animosity. While the economic aspect of these relations is undeniably important, the affective aspect has salience both in the context of Rodman's analysis of the individual and personal aspects of kinship ties (rather than prescribed obligations), as what maintains bonds and in the practice using economic support to show affect (love).

Historical Dimensions: Development of kinship and economy

During slavery, Africans were wrenched from their families and homes, shipped overseas and sold with little regard for their family ties or social group; in fact, efforts were made to separate people of the same ethnic origin (Patterson, 1982). Estranged from friends and family, slaves inevitably formed new social relations and developed new cultural forms and practices (Mintz and Price, 1976; Besson, 1995; Henriques, 1973 (1949); Beckles, 1995). In addition, the plantation system created relations of domination that were to affect the further development of economic and social life, including cultural values and forms, during and after slavery (Bush, 1990; Goveia, 1965; Morissey, 1989; Smith, 1960).

After emancipation, an exodus from the plantations occurred, in most parts of the region despite colonial efforts to retain the former slaves as salaried workers [6]. In Dominica, most former plantation slaves opted for some form of peasant agriculture (squatting the land, purchasing it, sharecropping, etc.), while those who knew trades (carpenter etc.) continued to practice them (Baker, 1994; Trouillot, 1988). Work on plantations was voluntary and sporadic, and used to supplement other, chiefly subsistence activities and a growing participation in certain commercial and service sectors. These had been the domain of the "free coloured" class, but were now

available, at least in part, to former slaves [7]. Migration to other areas of the island for work — to the capital Roseau for commerce or to plantations — was thus a possibility, as was migration to other islands. When sugar prices plummeted in the late 19th century, for example, and plantations stopped producing, many chose temporary migration to the gold mining areas of Venezuela and French Guyana (Guyane): in 1896 alone, 1,200 Dominicans migrated, out of a population of just over 20,000 (Myers, 1976). Some elderly persons recall relatives leaving for short periods to work in the gold mines of Guyane.

Labour migration became one of multiple strategies for economic survival, both within the island to plantations or to 'town,' or off the island. Early migration off the island was mainly masculine, but women also migrated both off the island and within. In 1901, the ratio of males to one thousand females was 801 (Myers, 1976: 71). During the period between the two World Wars, migration continued, as there were 5,637 more departures than arrivals (*ibid.* : 92). During this period, Myers suggests that one attraction for migrant workers was the oil refineries in Curaçao and Aruba, in addition to United States, especially during the 1920s (*ibid.* : 94). In the 1920s and 1930s migration towards Cuba and Dominican Republic to work on sugar plantations also occurred (Green, 1998: 289).

The migration of men off the island to work was accompanied, to a lesser extent, by a migration of women to the urban centre, Roseau, especially to look for work as domestics or seamstresses (Green, 1998: 278). According to the census of 1921, there were considerably more 'black' females than males in Roseau (2,476 to 1,793), and the difference in numbers was even more pronounced among the 'coloured' population [8], with almost twice as many females (1,496) as males (785). In the countryside, the proportions were much more balanced, although the ratio of females to males was slightly higher in most parishes, and inversely to Roseau, in most places, the difference was more pronounced among 'blacks', probably indicating more male migration from this group. When immigration for Caribbean residents to the United States was halted in 1942, under the McCarren Walter Act (Myers, 1976: 103), Great Britain became a choice destination, throughout the 1950s up to the passing of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962, which effectively plugged the exodus to England. Labour migration to other islands continued, and migration to North America, including Canada, increased. Canadian immigration laws were selective, allowing only limited numbers of Caribbean immigrants to fill certain niches in the job market: in the 1960s, for example, restricted numbers of women were allowed to enter as domestic workers (*ibid.* : 209).

Whereas prior to World War II, migration off the island had attracted more men, more recent international migration affects both sexes. Women who have little or no secondary education often migrate nowadays to work as domestics in the more developed regions of the Caribbean, or to North America. Frequently, they leave children behind with a relative, returning sometimes several years later, or sending for their children once they are established. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s, domestic workers from the Caribbean were brought into Canada on the Domestic Workers Scheme and were given full residency status after one year of work, now many migrate and work without proper papers. More stringent requirements regarding education (since 1992, a high school diploma is required (Bals, 1999)) and preferences for domestic workers from other areas, especially the Philippines, have made it more difficult for migrants from the Caribbean to enter as domestic workers [9]. Women arrive from the Caribbean as visitors and then search for employment 'under the table' in domestic work. Many have families back home that they support with their income. Men with little education sometimes migrate today, as they have for many years, under temporary agricultural schemes or try to procure visas for the United States to work in various trades such as construction. On the other hand, Dominicans with high school diplomas migrate to attend university, given they find the resources to do so, such as scholarships, their own savings, or family, and many of these begin a new life in the host country, as there are few opportunities in Dominica[10].

Whatever the goal of their migration, those who leave maintain their relations of sharing and support with those who remain at home – parents, children, etc. – often calling weekly, and sending gifts of money and goods as 'remittances' to loved ones. When possible, they sponsor close relatives to join them. With so many Dominicans 'out of state', transnational networks across states and continents have developed in which relations initiated in the homeland are nurtured and maintained, with people who have remained behind and with others who have migrated elsewhere. These experiences of transnationalism are "grounded in the daily lives, activities, and social relationships of migrants" (Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992: 5). In addition to the maintenance of deterritorialized relationships, a particular 'livelihood', seen as a life trajectory involving cultural practices and beliefs derived from home, is maintained (Olwig, 2002). Remittances have been examined for the economic benefits or dependencies they create in the homeland while their *signification* within the symbolic, social, and economic fields at home, especially in regards to connections among kin and friends, have been largely ignored.

Webs of Kin

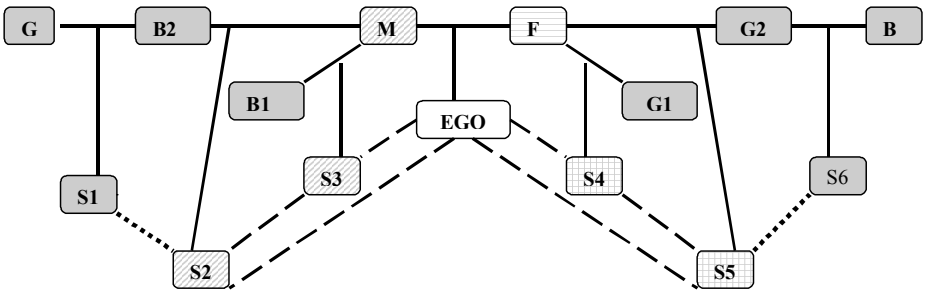
Developed in the context of slavery where people were estranged from

family and social group, kin relations based on networks of lateral, rather than lineal, ties were formed through parents and siblings. In the Caribbean, descent and inheritance are generally reckoned through both the mother and the father (bilateral), with variations depending on local laws [11]. To complicate matters, marriage is not the only form of conjugal relation; couples may live in common-law or in 'visiting' unions, and multiple relationships, either simultaneously or serially, are frequent (Clarke, 1957; Smith, 1956; Slater, 1977; Barrow, 1996). The result of this situation is that children who are born to the same mother may have different fathers, and children with the same father may have different mothers.

These relations connect people laterally. For example, Sam's mother has children with three different fathers. Sam's father has children with four different women. While Sam lives with his mother and her other children, he still interacts with the other children of his father, whom he considers to be his brothers and sisters. These brothers and sisters live with their respective mothers, who also have other children with different fathers. Because many siblings have only one parent in common, people will specify their relation to the sibling by saying "brother by father" or "sister by mother," and designate the un-related siblings of these half-siblings as "my brother's sister" or "my sister's sister," for example. A wide range of kin ties - both blood and affinal - are thereby created, as are ties by association to the non-related brothers, sisters, and parents of half-siblings, in several different households. While affective relations are not the same towards each person in the network, it remains that this wide lateral network can be tapped when necessary [12]. Strong affective ties also develop outside these kin relations towards friends, classmates, and neighbours, and close personal networks also include these people. These relations, which developed in Dominica and were cultivated through exchanges of food, money, and goods, are maintained in migration through communication (phone, letters, e-mail) and remittances of money and goods. Further aid and resources may be provided when the person remaining at home wishes to migrate (Olwig, 1993). Affective ties are sustained and mobilized when the time is appropriate.

When people leave, their relationships with family members and friends persist even though they may be separated from them by time and space. In a given family, several siblings may migrate, giving rise to broad transnational networks that may even span several continents. While some siblings may migrate to the same place as others, they will often end up in different localities, yet then continue close communication and interaction through frequent phone calls or even e-mail (few have it at home, but there are internet cafés in the capital), and visits, when possible, for holidays or family reunions. Occupation (job opportunities), period of migration

Figure 1: Example of a lateral kin network.



Sibling terms: With respect to Ego, S2 and S3 are her siblings 'by mother (through her relationships with B2 and B1)'; S4 and S5 are her siblings 'by father' (through his relationships with G1 and G2); and S1 and S6 are not related to Ego, but are connected to her through S2 and S5, as their siblings. S1 and S6 would thus be called Ego's 'brother's sister', her 'brother's brother', her 'sister's brother', or her 'sister's sister'. These siblings and 'siblings of siblings' provide the basis of a lateral network, as shown above.

(changing migration policies and again, available opportunities), and migration objectives (for example, to visit, to study or to work) may make a difference in choice of location, but the presence of family members (or friends) in a locality is a strong incentive to migrate to that place, especially if someone there is sponsoring the migrant. In some cases, family members and close friends/neighbours will migrate to the same city, even living, if not in the same household, in the same apartment building or neighbourhood. From there, some may leave for other regions.

For example, one young woman, Joyce, migrated to Montreal to study at a technical college. She met and married Melvin, a Dominican-Canadian, with whom she had her first child. The relationship did not work out, ending shortly after the birth of her child, but she remained in Montreal, having obtained her citizenship, and eventually met another man with whom she had two other children and now lives. She was then able to sponsor her sister, Betty, who also moved to Montreal, married, and a few years later, moved to Florida. In the meantime, a nephew and then a niece (children of their oldest sister) moved to Montreal. As well, two neighbours – friends - also migrated to Montreal. Joyce was central to these migrants' experience of immigration, as she

provided them with a roof, contacts for jobs, etc. All now live in the same apartment building, in different units. Another niece has since married and moved to Florida from Dominica, near her sister Betty. One nephew lives in England. Joyce's older sister, Martha, her husband and remaining two children live in Dominica, but keep in close contact with their other family members through frequent phone calls, usually made by Joyce as it is much more expensive to call from Dominica. Martha's family is also the recipient of money and barrels of goods; some of the goods shipped are resold out of her home or in another sister's store in the village. In Montreal, this family and their neighbours have come together, reproducing more or less the physical proximity of the village. At the same time, they have also created a transnational network spread out between Dominica, Miami, London, and Montreal, as close contact is maintained despite the distance.

Flexible Families

Flexible economic practices developed both during and after slavery. For most of Dominica's post-emancipation history, much of its population has been able to sustain itself at least partially through subsistence farming and the barter of goods and services, supplemented by salaried work, as described above. Most Dominicans (descendents of former slaves) were able to generate little cash from farming until the 1950s or later for some areas, when they started producing bananas for the formal market. This was partly due to the size of their plots and the lack of transportation infrastructure that would allow them to bring their produce to the market. Their main access to cash needed to buy sundries they could not produce themselves was through salaried work, either on local plantations or off-island. Many people performed – and still do - several occupations according to work availability and need for money. These could be carried out either within the same time frame, or consecutively. Migration thus has been integrated to the life trajectories of many Dominicans as another way to go about meeting their economic needs, as one of several strategies to find income-generating work (see Olwig, 1993, 1997).

For example, Bee first migrated to neighbouring Guadeloupe to work as a domestic servant, where she remained for three years. At the same time, she purchased goods that she brought back to Dominica to sell. With money she had saved in Guadeloupe and earned from the sale of her goods, she purchased a small shack, which she moved onto land that her brother had given her. She carried out odd jobs, frying chicken and selling it at the local bar, taking care of an elderly woman, some domestic work, etc. She used the money to fix up her little house, but finally left again to work in St. Martin, again as a domestic. When she will return is uncertain, but when she does, her almost completed house awaits her.

In addition, migration is written into the educational agendas of many families. Children have been, and still are, sent to Roseau to stay with a relative in order to attend secondary school. While primary schooling has been available throughout the island since the beginning of the 20th century, secondary schooling was until very recently only available in the capital. In the past, in fact, secondary school education was available to only a few students: there were very few schools and they were in Roseau. Students living in the countryside, who managed to pass the entrance exam, had to travel to go to school, and prior the 1960s or even the 1970s, many villages were not connected by motorable road to the capital. That meant that either they could not go, or they were obliged to stay with someone 'in town'. Secondary and post-secondary education was the privilege of the wealthy, and served the reproduction of class differences, especially prior to World War II. For those on the lower socio-economic echelons, not only did they have no access to secondary education, it had little relevance to most of their lives, which centred on subsistence activities requiring manual labour. Reforms in social welfare, which emphasized democratization and improvement of the self, also promoted education, and gradually the number of secondary schools increased (see Christian, 1992). More secondary schools means that approximately half of elementary school children are able to attend, and education is now encouraged by parents and grandparents who themselves are sometimes barely literate [13]. Even now, although many students commute daily, they must have the money to pay for the bus to town and back, while those who can, stay with relatives in town. Absence from the familial home to attend school is expected, so travelling further abroad for secondary or post-secondary education constitutes a variation of this practice. Of course, other factors come into play, such as availability of funds and the values associated with seeking education, which, according to Olwig (2002) is based on Caribbean middle class values of 'respectability' (see Wilson, 1973; Besson, 1993 for a discussion of the concept). The relative lack of post-secondary educational facilities in Dominica is also a factor that encourages migration to study abroad.

In addition to being sent away to be educated, children may be left with a relative or neighbour while the parents (usually the mother) works either in town or off the island, or a child might be informally adopted by someone to alleviate the economic strain on the family and to provide both 'company' and assistance to the adoptive parent. Senior (1991) has called the practice of taking care of others' children 'child-shifting' and is a common practice throughout the Caribbean, contributing to "balancing and managing dependency in relation to resources" (Barrow, 1996: 71). In some instances older children (teens) were sent to work for others, using their income to help support the familial household.

Several informants recounted instances of separation from their home or parents following one or more of the models discussed (sent away to school, left with someone while parents went away to work, or sent away to work). Young women were sometimes sent away just to work, usually as domestics for more wealthy relatives or others. That is the case with Nicole's older sister, who went to work for a dressmaker in Roseau when she was fifteen: now teens more frequently attend school. Another woman, Margaret, who was in her seventies when I interviewed her, recounted that when she was a young girl, she was sent away to work in the home of woman in another village, returning her earnings to her mother's home. Later, when she was married and moved away to the capital on the other side of the island, she took in her youngest sister so she could attend secondary school. Margaret also sent money and goods to help support her mother in the village. Kayla, twenty-nine, explained how her siblings all grew up in different homes, because her mother was not able to support them all. In fact, she stayed with Margaret for two years after she moved back to the village.

In another case, Nicole, a woman in her forties, recounts staying with her aunt and uncle in Roseau while she went to vocational high school in the 1970s. A distant cousin was also living in the house and attending school. Both helped out in the pharmacy run by the aunt and uncle, and in the house, cleaning and making meals, in exchange for their room and board. More recently, Christina, forty-five, who lived in Montreal for fifteen years, returned to Dominica, but sent her daughters back to Montreal to live with their aunt while attending high school with the hopes that they would eventually attend university there. Christina returns every year to visit her daughters, and they go home occasionally as well. Being fairly wealthy allows them to travel back and forth freely, something that is difficult for many. As a case in point, another woman, Agnes, worked in Montreal for several years as a care-giver, sending funds to support her three children back home and putting money aside to send for them so they could attend high school here, an expensive endeavour given the cost of applying for residency permits and airfare.

This internal migration, between households or from countryside to town, constitutes a template for international migration: those who leave to work ensure some form of support for those at home, and relatives take in children so they can to attend school. This is transposed to the overseas context, as migrants leave children at home with relatives (often a sister or the mother, but sometimes the father or someone in his family), forwarding remittances and eventually, if possible, sending for the child. Either way, the fact of having children taken care of by others in one's 'network' exemplifies how kin networks accommodate and facilitate migration practices, whether they take place within the island or outside. And the

fact of being separated from parents does not mean there is no love: rather, love is integral to relations of sharing and support.

Support, Sharing, and Love

Within the village community and kin system, forms of support and sharing developed, based on values associated with responsibility towards family members, and particular notions of love. While it appears obvious that immediate family would provide support for each other, especially parents to their children, the responsibilities of each member of the family towards the others are in fact imbued with cultural values particular to the region, its configuration of kin and other social relations, and the general socio-economic context (i.e. paucity of social services).

Women are often household heads (in approximately 50 % of cases in Dominica) and the main providers for their children, carrying out various tasks, including paid work outside the home, subsistence farming (though less so nowadays), making and selling foodstuffs at special events or on street corners, or sewing for others, in order to do so. Households are frequently matrifocal, that is, centred on one older woman and may include some of her children (sons or daughters) and their children (usually those of her daughters) (see Smith, 1956, 1996 for a definition). Other children, related or not, may also be part of the household. This type of domestic group provides support for its members: in a possible scenario, the daughters work outside the home, while the mother stays and oversees the household and children. Both sons and daughters, but especially sons, whether or not they live in the family home, are expected to attend to their mother's well being (as a show of 'love'), especially through monetary and other material contributions, as well as services rendered.

Men are also expected to contribute to the maintenance of their children, even though they are often absent from the households where their children are being raised. Indeed, their contribution is seen as a show of love and is more important than their physical presence. Lazarus-Black (1995) holds that fathering in the Caribbean is an 'event' that is 'marked' in relation to mothering, as highly visible special occasions or gifts that are out of the ordinary. In Dominica, absent fathers are expected to provide school supplies and uniforms, clothing such as shoes, as well as foodstuffs for their children. Fathers are called upon as well to provide money for medical fees or travel. While they are not always physically present in the everyday lives of their children, they are most often involved through the support they provide [14]. Failure to meet these expectations is spoken of as a lack of 'love' for the child. The same is true for other relations that involve sharing: absence from the household, the village or even the island is compensated by the contribution of money and goods to the mother's household and to one's

children, as well as to others (neighbours, friends, godchildren) with whom one holds a special relation.

Indeed, households are often maintained in part by people who are absent from them, whether they live in the village, in the capital, or out of state. An absent father sends money and clothing to help support his children and his mother, whether he lives down the road or in Jersey; a mother, leaving her child with her own mother, goes to work in the capital, or leaves for St. Thomas (U.S. Virgin Islands). We can see where migration practices can easily fit into this picture: the father, absent anyway but just a little farther afield, sends money and clothing to help support his children, while the mother, who must work and leave her children with her mother, goes overseas. Remittances, usually sent as money transfers or barrels of imperishable foods and clothing, while important for their economic benefit, have salience within the practices of support in households both at home and abroad, as a show of love. As well, like the "out of state" designation on the household reports mentioned at the beginning of this article, remittances act as place-holders, maintaining one's symbolic presence through material goods within the household, as well as contributing to improving both the social and economic position of both the receiver and the sender.

Sharing and reciprocity, as are other practices, are configured and intertwined with values particular to the people practicing them. Why does one share? What does one share? What does it mean to share? When and with whom does one share? What happens if one does not share? Sharing both provides economic well-being and redistribution of goods and services, and creates and maintains relationships: "love" as sharing is the expression of this relationship. As well, sharing, because it is an expected social practice, helps to position one as a proper individual in the social group. When a person provides well for his or her parent, the material benefit, in the form of such goods as television sets, refrigerators, furniture, and even houses, are signs of this contribution. This in turn reflects on the person contributing, showing him or her to be socially upstanding, a loving child (or parent, etc.) and successful enough to provide well, thus increasing his or her prestige and even social status 'back home'.

If one does not share with, or help to provide for close family members (and sometimes others as well), then it would be said that the person 'has no love.' While the person would not be ostracized from or within the community at large, family members may cut off all communication with the person. The person may also feel embarrassed, and cease communication him or herself. The inverse may also be true: if a dispute arise, one may cut off any communication and support. In the village, this can translate into ignoring the person in public spaces (greeting, as acknowledgement of the other, is important in village

interpersonal relations) and not interacting with her or him in any way privately as well. When one of the parties is out of state, this can be shown by an absence of phone calls and gifts. Affection, without economic provision of some sort, is not considered to be love, or at least not the proper expression of love, and the physical absence of a father or mother who migrated, for example, is not considered to show a lack of love, as long as economic support is forthcoming. On the other hand, withholding economic support and stopping other forms of communication can be used to express one's displeasure. This intermingling of affective and economic connections constitutes an important axis of networking and interaction among Dominicans, and is transposed to the transnational arena.

Conclusion

A small island state such as Dominica has few opportunities to offer its people in the way of wage-earning employment and post-secondary education. In addition to the historical impediments discussed, agriculture is subject to international market fluctuations and controls as well as to natural disasters such as hurricanes and disease that destroy crops. These factors have likely been very important to the development and maintenance, over the past century and more, of migratory practices. Historically, social relations and economic practices including wide lateral kin-based networks, flexibility in economic practices and child-rearing, have combined and incorporated these migratory practices so they have become intrinsic to all aspects of Dominican life for both those who leave and those who stay – and most families have at least one immediate family member who has left. Importantly, as well, symbolic resources at home – one's social position and prestige are maintained through the remittances. What about affective relations? What role do they play? Given the importance of affect in maintaining connections, it would seem it is instrumental in the enactment and maintenance of social, economic, and symbolic resources.

Rodman's (1971) approach, outlined above, posits the lack of prescriptive relations, interactions, or and behaviours as aspects of Caribbean lifestyle and culture that allow for an easy adaptation to economic circumstances. In the case of Dominican migrants, these aspects are manifested in the relations of sharing described above: while sharing and support are expected, there are no drastic social reprieves if one does not – only mutual exclusion. And while economic support – which can be understood within the concept of generalized reciprocity and thus as a form of economic exchange – is important and follows certain accepted practices (who to give to, what to give, how and when to give it), it is *personally* undertaken out of choice, from one individual to another. Sharing does not only provide economic support, but works to maintain personal relations and networks, based on feelings of affection and love. It does

not involve the maintenance of wider social groups or their alliances, as is the case with bride wealth, nor is it a public event, as is the case with potlatches or Melanesian feasts. The social resources – kin and friend networks; the economic resources – the system of exchange and support; and the symbolic resources – the maintenance of social position and prestige – are thus strung together on the filament of a particular practice of love. Affect, rather than economic benefit alone, is the ingredient that sustains the transnational network, and that creates such a presence of absence, so that being 'out of state' is not being out of mind.

Notes

[1] Research for both was funded by the Fonds québécois pour la recherche sur la société et la culture.

[2] According to estimates for 2004, Grenada's net migration rate will be slightly higher, at –13.92 per 1000. Compare to Jamaica, at –4.92 per 1000, Barbados with -0.31 per 1000, and, outside the Caribbean, the Philippines, at –1.5 per 1000, and India at –0.07 per 1000.

[3] Blackman (1985) outlines four phases of Caribbean migration: the first phase from 1830s to the 1880s involved migration within the region from small islands to larger ones to work on plantations, alongwith contract workers from Europe and Asia; phase two followed the collapse of the sugar industry in the 1880s, lasting until the 1920s, and involved movements to Cuba, the United Kingdom, and Central and South America; the third phase occurred between the two World Wars and involved large numbers of migrants returning home due to the depressed economy, although inter-island migration was promoted; phase four was marked by the emigration to the United States at the onset of WWII to replace missing agricultural labourers, and subsequently to the United Kingdom to work on rebuilding efforts and to Canada as seasonal agricultural and domestic workers.

[4] Male migration was prevalent until after World War II, as can be seen from the ratio of men to women derived from census figures. For example, in 1901, the ratio was 80 to 100, while in 1946, it was 88, in 1970, 90, and in 1981, 99.

[5] The goal here is not to attempt a definition of the term 'love' but to interpret it as used by informants in the ethnographic research.

[6] British slavery ended in 1834, followed by a four-year apprenticeship period wherein former slaves were bound to remain on the plantation to work for a wage.

[7] In some cases, especially in the French Caribbean, these children of unions between white men and slave women were manumitted and even inherited land and riches from their fathers. These 'free coloureds', while they did not have the social or legal status of whites, were not enslaved and were able to hold and transact property, including slaves.

[8] Census categories of the time followed the pre-emancipation colour-referenced social divisions: white Europeans and their descendents, the free-coloured population as described in note 7, and black slaves.

[9] Even in the 1960s and 1970s, not all women who migrated as domestic workers had worked in that field in their home country: women targeted for the Domestic Workers Scheme were often already working as clerks, secretaries, teachers, or nurses. They came, according to one informant, to seek opportunities outside the domestic field. Now, women with secondary education or beyond apparently do not seek to migrate in this way.

[10] Post-secondary education is limited in Dominica to a vocational and teacher's college that offers some introductory level university courses. There is an American

medical school in Dominica but its clientele is mainly American.

[11] Besson (1995) identified kin relations in Jamaica as having developed in conjunction with a land tenure system known as 'family land'. Kin relations are bilateral and of unrestricted cognatic descent, so that all descendants have equal access to the land

which is passed on undivided, by both parents. The same can be said of Dominica. All children of each parent have rights to their land. However, if the father is married, his children from that marriage will usually be given precedence.

[12] Several authors have considered kin networks and family types in the Caribbean as an adaptive response that facilitates individual agency, allowing one to act in ways that will best ensure one's survival (Rodman, 1971). Variety in conjugal patterns and 'child-shifting' allow one to maximize economic potential (Barrow, 1996; Senior, 1991; Gordon, 1987). Extensive kin networks are seen by Gussler (1980) and Olwig (1993) as being fostered for economic support. While the economic aspect of these relations is undoubtedly important, it must be understood in relation to the affective underpinnings that work to maintain them.

[13] However, fewer than 10% of those who attend secondary school graduate (Goldberg and Bruno, 1999).

[14] They may also be expected to administer discipline to their children: their absence does not relieve them of all authority although mothers are usually the disciplinarians.

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