DEATH OF THE NINE-NIGHT

JAMAICAN HERITAGE AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING DEATH RITUALS

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ABSTRACT

The research investigated whether changes to death rituals constituted a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the Jamaican UK diaspora based on concerns being expressed in both locations. It establishes the nature, extent and causes of the changes, with particular reference to Jamaica's post-slavery and post-colonial history, and discusses the consequences of the changes in Jamaica, within the UK diaspora, and the wider implications for heritage in diasporas.

The study employed an interpretative philosophy and mixed method data collection including semi-structured interviews, oral history, and ethnographic observations of death ritual events in both locations.

Using the concept of crisis as 'events and processes that carry severe threat, uncertainty, an unknown outcome, and urgency' (Farazmand, 2014 p3) and the understanding that 'crisis is a crisis because the individual knows no response to deal with a situation' (Carkhuff and Berenson, 1977 p165), the study finds that certain sectors of the Jamaican population in both locations experience the changes to the death rituals as crises of heritage and national identity.

The discussion of the findings is framed within the concepts of crisis of change, living in liminality, and the creativity of ambivalence as ways of understanding the multiple crises within which the changes to the death rituals are being experienced. By interpreting the data through the lens of ambivalence the research proposes that it is

an explanation for Jamaica's prominence on the world stage despite its diminutive physical size and demographics.

The study makes significant contributions to a broad spectrum of social and political theories including ritual, and in particular the concept of liminality as both a process within ritual, and as an analytical tool of local and global crisis. It contributes to religious studies, specifically in the areas of death and bereavement studies. It also contributes to theories of heritage, identity, national identity, and diaspora, including the use of relational dialectic theory to demonstrate the extended familial concept of diaspora and the homeland.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Wirkom Fred Mbiydzenuyuy, former director of Self Reliance Promotors in Kumbo, Cameroon. He welcomed me as a volunteer to the project in 2013 and mentored me in the ways of the Nso people. He very much looked forward to calling me ‘Dr Yaa’ but sadly died in February 2021 before the thesis was completed. He touched so many lives. His work will continue.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The nature of the problem to be investigated

Within the last six years there has been growing concern in Jamaica (Williams 2015) and in the Jamaican UK diaspora (Gordon 2018), that changes to Jamaican death rituals are leading to a loss of cultural heritage and a loss of national identity. Strong national identity is a desirable and important characteristic in any nation but is particularly so in young nation states such as Jamaica for a number of reasons. Strong national identity enhances physical security, facilitates economic development, fosters trust among citizens, engenders support for strong safety nets and inspires good governance (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1991; Herbert, 2013; Fukuyama, 2018). Indeed, Fukuyama (2018) asserts that strong national identity actually makes liberal democracy possible. The importance of national identity for good governance is of such importance that 45 of the world's most developed nations include it as part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) which was established in 1984 to inform governments of the social state of their nations. The ISSP conducts surveys at 5-to-10-year intervals in each of the member states and includes knowledge and practice of traditions as indicators of strong national identity (Gesis, 1995, 2003, 2013). Jamaica has not yet achieved developed nation status, is therefore ineligible for membership of ISSP, and does not currently engage in systematic assessment of knowledge and practice of traditions as an indicator of the state of national identity. The social state of the nation is assessed by the

government via its own statistical data, national and international news media, academic publications, and artforms, particularly music.

The state of Jamaica's national identity following its independence from Britain in 1962 has been the subject of interest and commentary within Jamaica (Patterson, 1964; Nettleford, 1998) and from elsewhere (Thomas, 2004, 2011; Palmer, 2014; Johnson, 2019). Nettleford, in the introduction to his seminal collection of essays *Mirror Mirror, identity race and protest in Jamaica* concluded that the state of Jamaica's national identity was one of 'complexity and ambivalence' (Nettleford, 1998 pxxvii) a result of the racial and cultural mix of the nation and the prominence given to the different ingredients of the mix. As he observed, 'a numerical majority is called upon to function as a cultural minority' (Nettleford, 1998 pxiv), by which he means that the European heritage and cultural practices of the minority were being promoted by the government as the cultural heritage and national identity of the majority Black nationals of African descent. This was, and still is, a view shared within and outside of the academic forum (Patterson, 1965, 2019; Chevannes, 1994; Thomas, 2004; Palmer, 2014).

Culture, particularly as it relates to race and the legacy of slavery, has been vehemently contested in Jamaica, most notably by Rastafari, a group which began as a small resistance movement and has grown into an international religion (Barrett, 1977; Chevannes, 1994; Beckford, 1998; Murrell, Spencer and McFarlane, 1998). Other voices dissenting from the government's position of a melting pot approach to race and national identity in Jamaica's post-independence development questioned the premise on which Jamaica's official national identity was constructed. Nettleford (1998 p11) notes that once the 'struggle' of achieving independence was won 'the

question of national identity shifted to definitions about *who* comprised the “native population”, and by implication, *what* constituted the “nativeness” of the society’.

In 1965 Patterson, in his article *Outside History: Jamaica today* asked the question ‘What is a Jamaican? (Patterson, 1965 p35). He was querying, on his return from studying in Britain for three years, whether there was any meaningful cultural or personal definition of a Jamaican. His question was based on his observation of Jamaica made from abroad in much the same way many Jamaicans in the UK and other diasporas currently observe Jamaica and perhaps ask the same question as many of the issues he observed then still exists. He suggests that Jamaicans should define themselves culturally as ‘an integrated culture rooted in a past having some degree of continuity and which exists in some kind of civilizational framework’ (Patterson, 1965 p35). The paper was an invitation to Jamaicans to engage in an introspective exercise of identity now that they were no longer constrained by the British. This study is part of that introspective work and attests that the introspection exists not just in Jamaica but among Jamaicans in Britain from which Jamaica gained its independence.

Patterson, along with others, questioned the government’s official image of the national identity of Jamaica as a melting pot of races with its motto of ‘Out of many one people’, feeling as they did that the masses of the nation were poorly reflected in the national culture being proffered by the government, leading Nettleford to remark that ‘In Jamaica the blacks are not regarded as the desirable symbol for national identity (Nettleford, 1998, p36).

Over two decades after Nettleford’s first publication of *Mirror Mirror*: *identity, race and protest in Jamaica* (Nettleford 1998) in which he addressed the many

components of, and the barriers to a strong Jamaican national identity, the Jamaican government made attempts to foster a more cohesive national identity. The government published its vision for the country in a national development plan. *Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan: Planning for a secure and prosperous future* aimed at promoting a united family 'at home and abroad' who are encouraged to commit to creating and advancing national prosperity and security 'by vigorously seeking, learning, generating, and applying scientific and technological knowledge' (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2010 p2). A guiding principle of the plan is social cohesion, with 'national pride' a core and transformational value (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2010 p13). Explicit in the plan is the intention to promote Jamaicans, wherever they reside in the world, as a united family nation. It is for this reason that the family based relational dialectic theory is applied to this study.

The four main goals within the plan relate to empowerment of citizens to fulfil their potential, security and safety, economic development, and health. Culture, history and heritage are recognised as effective tools in achieving these goals, but the main focus is on museums, festivals, libraries, heritage sites, the National Anthem and national symbols such as the Jamaican flag (p27), not on intangible heritage such as death rituals. Despite a requirement to 'preserve, develop and promote our cultural heritage in all its forms' (p27), the Jamaica National Heritage Trust's (JNHT) mission statement shows its bias towards material heritage: 'To inspire a sense of national pride through the promotion, preservation, and development of our *material* cultural heritage' (JNHT, 2022, emphasis added), which in most cases is built heritage with connections to European slavery and colonisation. This does not indicate a foregrounding of the role intangible cultural practices such as death rituals have to play in social cohesion, security and safety, economic development and health, or in

uniting the ‘extended family’ living in the UK and other diasporas with their ‘family’ in Jamaica.

Physical safety, one of the key goals of the Jamaica Development Plan, has been deteriorating in Jamaica since its birth as a nation state in 1962. This is reflected in the number of unlawful killings which increased from 63 in 1962 and made a steady climb to a peak of 1.683 in 2009 (Harriott and Jones, 2016). In 2020 unlawful killings stood at 1.323, the highest in the Caribbean and per capita the highest in the world (Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2022). The increase has been attributed mainly to political violence related to elections, particularly between 1972 and 1980, economic stagnation and gang warfare (Thomas, 2004). Most victims of unlawful killings are male, young, uneducated and poor. In 2013 90% of all victims were male (Harriot and Jones, 2016 p14). There has similarly been an increase in unlawful killings among males in the ‘extended Jamaica family’ in the UK diaspora where concerns are being expressed by religious ministers and by mainly, but not exclusively, older members of the community about the lack of recognition by the younger generation of Jamaican heritage, values and identity. The relationship between physical safety and national identity has been researched in decolonised nations (Luckman, Moncrieffe and Harris, 2006; Kaplan, 2009; DFID, 2010; Herbert, 2013) and strong links identified between strong national identity and reduction in violent crimes. This study does not aim to explore the relationship between heritage and extreme violence in Jamaica, rather its focus is on the extent to which heritage influences strong national identity, which has been shown to be a contributory factor for good governance and the reduction of violence. The study is mindful of Mercer’s observations that ‘identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt

and uncertainty' (Mercer, 1990 p4). Harrison similarly contends that in relation to concerns about the loss of heritage 'things tend to be classified as "heritage" only in light of some risk to losing them' (Harrison, 2010 p13).

The concerns about the death rituals are mainly centred around changes to three of the public rituals, namely, nine-nights, funerals and burials. They include the protocols relating to nine-nights such as the extended timeline for when the ritual is performed, the nature of the activities included in the event, and the erosion of the meaning of the ritual. There is also concern about the changing dress code at funerals, the increasing length of the service as well as the increasing extravagance of the event. With regards to burials, there is contempt for what some see as disrespect for the sacredness of the ritual shown by attendees who talk loudly, drink rum and smoke marijuana during the ritual. There is also disquiet for the lack of singing at the graveside while the grave is being filled in.

These transformations are seen by some in the UK diaspora as an assault on Jamaican cultural heritage and a weakening of Jamaican national identity. In the words of one gentleman in the diaspora who was interviewed for this research project 'we're losing our heritage, the younger people are not respecting our heritage, and the older ones are setting them a bad example. This is about our identity as Jamaicans' (Male, aged 64, in the UK). Similar concerns are being expressed in Jamaica. The articles *Death of the nine-night Part 1*, and *The death of ninth-nights Part 2* (Williams, 2015) sought in the first to describe the activities at a traditional nine-night, while the second detailed the changes to the ritual and the undesirable effects these changes were having, primarily a 'fracturing of communities and of communal relationships' (Williams, 2015), echoing the UK concerns for the meanings of the rituals being lost and the adverse implications for their Jamaican heritage.

There is very little academic literature on Jamaican death rituals. Chevannes (1994) provides a succinct chronology of the rituals involved from death to burial and the final act of 'tombing' in his thesis on Rastafari. His focus is the group's rejection of the customs in the development of the religion, rather than on the rituals as heritage. The main source of information on the rituals as heritage is contained in Senior's *The Encyclopaedia of Jamaican Heritage* (2003) which was an extremely valuable resource for this study. Newspaper articles such as Tortello's A *time to die, death rituals* (2006) present the rituals of nine-nights and passing babies and young children over coffins as cultural heritage. Interestingly, there is considerable commentary on Jamaican death customs on travel sites such as Rough Guides (2017), The Real Jamaica Vacation (2017), and Camp Carbarita (2017) which aim to inform the many tourists who visit Jamaica each year on aspects of Jamaican culture, an indication that the death rituals have popular significance, even though they have not yet been recognised by official sources as heritage.

There are many definitions and conceptualisations of heritage. Some relate to physical artefacts that are passed down through generations as family heirlooms others relate to the monuments, buildings, nature and historic sites that are preserved as national heritage (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; Carman, 2002; Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013). There are also definitions that recognise cultural practices such as festivals, skills, music, food, and rituals, including death rituals, as intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003; Smith and Akagawa, 2009; Akagawa and Smith, 2019). This study is concerned with the intangible aspect of heritage, with death rituals as intangible cultural heritage.

Smith (2006 p13) posits that there is nothing that is inherently 'heritage', that heritage is defined by its use, by the 'work' it is required to do and consequently it is subject to

change depending on the requirements of the present. Tunbridge and Ashworth, (1996) make the point that heritage is not the same as history, but rather a set of attitudes to, and relationship with the past. Heritage is thus an *aspect* of history moulded and shaped to meet the needs of the current generation, needs which include creating nations, national identities, and contesting history, uses that have all been employed in the Jamaican context. Tunbridge and Ashford in their discussion of the intergenerational links between the past and the future that heritage bridges, assert that 'The present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future' (Tunbridge and Ashford, 1996 p6). This is consistent, as will be shown in Chapter 2, with Anderson's conceptualisation of nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 1983, 2016). This study aims to uncover the 'work' of death rituals in Jamaican heritage by determining the meanings which they are ascribed, and to ascertain whether the concerns about changes are an indication of functional changes.

The literature on national identity is extensive and is mainly located in political science (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1991; Kaplan, 2009; Herbert, 2013; Fukuyama, 2018). National identity is inextricably interwoven with culture and heritage by nature of their use by governments in the construction, contestation and maintenance of national identity as discussed above (Kaplan 2009; Herbert 2013; Fukuyama 2018). Definitions of national identity, like the concepts of heritage, diaspora and rituals which are central to this study, are varied and context-specific. One strategy Mandler (2006 p290) suggests for dealing with the complexity of the term is to tease out a single strand or symbol of 'nation' and follow it across time, place and genre. It is the approach used in this study, the single strand being death rituals. There are other strands of Jamaica's national identity that have been more extensively researched,

particularly those of music (Manuel and Marshall, 2006; Hope, 2015; Gansinger, 2019; 2020), dance (Nettleford, 1969, 1985, 2009), and Rastafari, the religion that originates in Jamaica (Barrett, 1977; Chavannes, 1994; Nettleford, 1998; Murrell et al, 1998; Beckford, 2014), all of which play significant roles within the death rituals. This study not only draws on this literature but extends it by demonstrating that Jamaican death rituals are integral to Jamaican culture, heritage and national identity.

Comparisons have been made between the UK diaspora, part of the ‘extended family’, and the Jamaican homeland in different areas of life. For example, Vassel (2002) explored *Black masculinity in further education colleges in Britain and Jamaica*, and Horst (2004) focused on members of the UK diaspora returning home, describing the issues they encountered settling back into the homeland. More latterly Patterson-Igwe (2019) compared school accountability in the Jamaican and English education systems. This demonstrates a continued interest by researchers in the relationship between the ‘extended family’ and the homeland, and the post-colonial relationship between Jamaica and the UK. While these studies have focused on the differences between the two locations, this study addresses the similarities as well as the differences by extending the family metaphor and treating the two groups as one family, as the concerns about the rituals are being expressed in both locations. By applying relational dialectic theory, which emphasises that some phenomena within families emerges through the process of interplay or struggle of competing possibilities (Baxter et al, 2021), the meaning of the rituals and the responses to changes are addressed. It also allows for the tensions and contradictions within and between the two locations to be uncovered.

With regard to the literature on rituals, Wilson (1954 p240) posits that the study of rituals is ‘the key to understanding the essential constitution of human societies.’ Durkheim’s (1912) extremely influential work on rituals emphasises their social cohesive function. He contends that rituals, when practised collectively, foster a heightened sense of group solidarity. They are important ingredients of national identity, as evidenced by governments creating ‘traditional’ rituals where none previously existed, particularly in new nation states (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). Rituals are also defined as processes that enable transitions from one life state to another, such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Van Gennep promoted this in his highly influential *Rites of passage* (1960). Turner’s (1967) extension of van Gennep’s theory of liminality, that is, the space between death and final disposal of the body, is used in this dissertation not just in the interpretation of rituals themselves but is also applied as an analytical tool to determine the experience of crisis. The study addresses rituals as processes of transition, and also the processes by which the rituals themselves are being transformed.

The study investigated whether the concerns about the changes to Jamaican death rituals were being experienced as a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the UK diaspora, by identifying the causes and consequences of the changes. The issues are addressed in both locations due to the Jamaican government’s encouragement of Jamaicans in diasporas to maintain a strong national identity, and because many Jamaicans in the UK are very strongly identified as Jamaicans. Many have dual nationality which is not a phenomenon exclusive to older Jamaicans. An increasing number of younger UK-born Jamaicans have, or are in the process of acquiring dual citizenship, Jamaica’s Prime Minister Andrew Holness informed the

2022 *Jamaica 60 Diaspora Conference*. ‘There has been a noticeable increase in the number of persons of Jamaican heritage overseas applying for Jamaican citizenship’ (The Gleaner, 2022 n/p). These strongly identified Jamaicans maintain active involvement in Jamaican life in personal, social and political ways and it is therefore important to understand how they influence and are influenced by the changes.

The research objectives and questions are outlined below.

1.2 Research objectives, questions and methods

Research objective – To investigate whether changes to Jamaican death rituals constitute a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the UK diaspora, and to determine the causes and consequences of the changes.

The research posed the questions:

Question 1 – What is the nature and extent of the changes to Jamaican death rituals?

Question 2 – What is causing the changes to the death rituals?

Question 3 – What are the consequences of the changes to the death rituals?

Research philosophy, design and data collecting methods

The research employed an interpretative philosophy, and a qualitative strategy. A comparative case study was used to evaluate the extent to which the concerns and issues were reflected in Jamaica and in the UK diaspora. Phenomenology and

ethnography provided the theoretical underpinnings for the research design. Using Denscombe's definition of phenomenology as 'something that stands in need of explanation; something of which we are aware but something that as yet, remains known only to us in terms of how it appears to us directly through our senses' (Denscombe, 2017 p138), it was possible to probe the meanings Jamaicans ascribe to the rituals, the processes by which the changes are being effected, and the consequences of the changes both individually and collectively.

Ethnography, despite its many ethical considerations, was used to gather data from the ritual events. My researcher status was not declared at the events to minimise what Denscombe sees as 'the inevitable influence of the researcher's "self" on the whole research endeavour' (Denscombe, 2017 p93). I did not want participants in the rituals to alter their behaviour because they were aware of being researched, and being a Jamaican myself I was able to blend inconspicuously and inoffensively into the large groups that generally attend such events. However, in general discussions within the communities concerning individuals' beliefs and opinions about the rituals, I made my researcher status known and sought permission to use the discussions as data.

Data for the research was gathered using documents, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Documents such as newspaper and web articles, photographs, order of service programmes, funeral directors' brochures and pricelists were used in addition to books and academic journal articles to provide background information that aided the design of the questionnaire and the development of the interview questions. The questionnaire was used to ascertain participants' awareness of, and practise of the rituals, as well as their understanding of the meanings of the rituals. The questionnaire was originally planned as a survey

tool, but subsequent to piloting, it was integrated into the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to identify the different death rituals carried out by Jamaicans and to ascertain their meanings. The interviews were also used to gather data on the role death rituals play in defining Jamaica's national identity, the nature, causes and consequences of the changes, as well as suggestions for possible solutions to the changes. The data from the questionnaire and interviews enabled the most comprehensive categorisation to date of Jamaican death rituals, their origins and their meanings to be compiled. Participant observation was used to compare the interviewees' reports of ritual performance with actual performance, to compare the differences between the way the rituals are carried out in Jamaica and in the UK diaspora, and to engage with and seek the views of a wide range of individuals in both communities who were not formal interviewees of the project.

The research aimed to conduct 120 interviews, sixty in each location, but due to the Covid-19 restrictions in both places only 48 interviews in total were possible. This, however, proved an adequate number from which to extract themes, identify trends, and provide answers to the research questions. Non-probability sampling was used to select the first ten interviewees, following which snowball sampling was used to identify further interviewees, including gatekeepers to communities such as Rastafari, Kumina and the Maroons who are known to be reluctant to engage in research. The questionnaire was completed as part of the semi-structured interviews which were carried out on a one-to-one basis, recorded and later transcribed. The interviews ranged in length from ten minutes to 40 minutes. Fifty observations were planned. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic 49 observations of ritual events were possible as a number were accessed via recordings or live streaming on various internet platforms. These included grave-digging, nine-nights, funerals, burials and

receptions/repasses. Specific activities at each event were recorded using a prepared observation schedule to ensure consistency of data collection.

The data was collected between October 1st 2019 and September 30th 2020 in three phases. The first phase of interviews and observations was undertaken between 1st October 2019 and 31st January 2020 in the UK. The second phase was planned to replicate the first phase of four months in Jamaica to take place between 1st February 2020 and 31st May 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 restrictions which came into force on March 10th while I was still in Jamaica, not only was I unable to observe death rituals because only ten individuals were permitted to attend them, I was also unable to leave Jamaica until 24th July 2020 due to flight restrictions. The third phase which was planned to address any gaps in the data, had to be truncated from the planned four months to two months between 31st July to 30th September 2020.

1.3 Significance of the study

The study makes a significant contribution to understanding the experience of crisis in response to loss of heritage and national identity. It also provides considerable insight into the crises that results from prolonged experience of liminality, both within the rituals, such as the delay in disposal of the body, and within the wider society as a result of extended social transition. It argues that the 'ambivalence and complexity' (Netleford, 1998 pxi) surrounding Jamaica's national identity need not be experienced as a negative phenomenon. Instead, the study concludes that ambivalence acts as a dynamic force for Jamaica's creativity which is evidenced by a global presence exceeding its physical and demographic size. The ambivalence, which is experienced both positively and negatively, creates what Johnson (2019)

observes as dialectic tension which both degrades and enhances Jamaica's national image.

The dissertation presents an analysis of the process by which the rituals are being transformed and the intergenerational consequences for transmitting heritage, which can be applied to transformations of rituals in other societies. Of note is the marginalisation of male roles from the rituals which may be a contributory factor to the 'violence and mayhem' (Gouldson, 2020) being perpetrated in Jamaica by young men. However, the changes also present an opportunity to develop new rituals which are reflective of the nation's current needs and experiences.

The study identifies the main causes of transformation of the rituals as acculturation, increased affluence, the medicalisation of death and the role played by funeral directors, technology, changing values and changing religious beliefs, with significant influence of Rastafari. The study also identifies the specific forms of resistance to Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), and authorised national identity that have challenged successive Jamaican governments.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is presented in eight chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theoretical conceptualisations of heritage, national identity, diaspora and ritual in order to locate this study within the existing literature that informs and supports the research. The first section focuses on ritual as a means of understanding a nation's culture, 'the essential constitution of human societies' (Wilson, 1954 p240). It provides an overview of ritual's early conceptualisations in religion, anthropology, and sociology (Bell, 2009). Early conceptualisations of ritual

by anthropologists such as Turner (1967) and Geertz (1973) are still relevant as a means of recognising and understanding the place and purpose of rituals in modern societies.

The literature review proceeds to explore definitions and uses of heritage, particularly in relation to contesting history and constructing traditions and national identity. It also explores heritage as a means of remembering and its applicability to oral history which was used as part of the data gathering process. This is followed by an examination of the connections between heritage and national identity and the extent to which heritage is used to construct and promote a nation's identity.

The Jamaican diaspora is analysed using the theories of Sanfras (1991, 2004) and Cohen (2008) and by demonstrating that despite the evolving definitions of diaspora, and after more than 70 years in the UK, the Jamaican UK diaspora maintains all the characteristics identified by them, particularly in terms of 'a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group' (Cohen, 2008 p17).

Chapter 3 sets the context for the research with a brief overview of Jamaica's geography and history including the experience of slavery and colonisation which resulted in its current ethnic make-up, from which the nation's motto *Out Of Many One People* is derived. Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962 is discussed to illustrate the social, political and cultural relationship between Jamaica and the UK which underpins the ambivalence and complexity of Jamaican national identity. The publication in 2010 of a twenty-year plan by the Jamaican government to facilitate Jamaica becoming a developed nation by 2030 is discussed, particularly in the context of the Jamaican Government's attempts to transform Jamaica from an *ethnie*

(Black) nation into a more cosmopolitan civic one. I argue in Chapter 6 that this has had a significant effect on Jamaica's 'community' values which is reflected in the changes to the rituals. The formation of the Jamaican UK diaspora including the substantial increase by the largest single influx of hundreds of Jamaicans on the SS Empire Windrush ship in 1948 is discussed. Their initial and continued experiences of hostility and their attempts to maintain national identity through heritage and ritual practice forms part of the necessary transformations to ritual practice in the UK (Gilroy, 1993; Phillips and Phillips, 1998; Hall, 1999; Olusoga, 2016). The diaspora's relationship with the homeland at personal and governmental levels, and the ways in which they influence and are influenced by Jamaica is demonstrated to have significant bearing on the changes to the rituals.

Chapter 4 outlines the research philosophy, strategies, and design as well as the methods employed for collecting the data. The study uses an interpretative philosophy consistent with the qualitative strategies of case studies, phenomenology and ethnography. The methods used for collecting the data included documents, questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation. This chapter also outlines the ethical implications for researching a sensitive subject such as death rituals using participant observation, and describes how these and other ethical issues were addressed.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present the analysis and discussion of the data and are grouped under three main themes: 1) the rituals as they were previously performed and as they are performed currently, 2) the agents of change, the processes by which meaning is being transformed, and the consequences of the changes, and 3) the extent of ritual transformation and strategies for preserving them as heritage.

Chapter 5 presents detailed accounts of rituals as they were practised in the past to enable an evaluation of the nature and extent of changes when compared to current practices. It uses Smith's (2006) conceptualisation of heritage as memory, and focuses mainly on the recollections of interviewees 65 years and over, as well as corroborative documentary evidence. The rituals are categorised into their symbolic uses which include protection from the spirit of the deceased, preparing the deceased for the afterlife, protection of the spirit of the deceased, and assisting the grieving process.

Chapter 6 identifies the main causes of the changes to the death rituals as acculturation, failure to teach the rituals to young people, increased affluence, medicalisation of death and the increasing influence of funeral directors, technology, changing values and changing religious beliefs including the influence of Rastafari. The chapter outlines the specific consequences of the changes on heritage and national identity.

Chapter 7 asks whether the rituals can be preserved. It outlines the rituals that are most at risk of extinction and those that are still valued and widely practised. It also presents the interviewees suggestions for preserving the rituals as heritage.

Chapter 8 discusses the wider implications of the research findings. It demonstrates the extent to which the research objectives were met and the research questions answered. The chapter also discusses the contributions this study makes to theory, policy and practice, outlines the limitations of the study, and makes recommendations for further research.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter sets out the nature of the problem to be investigated, that is, whether changes to Jamaican death rituals constitute a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the UK diaspora, and to determine the causes and consequences of the changes. With such a wide-ranging objective several themes have emerged which are discussed in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. However, the threads that are woven throughout all the themes are those of meaning, processes, and the ambivalence of Jamaicans to their national identity, a result of the complexity of the origins of the nation.

This study is the result of community concerns about death rituals that are being transformed or becoming extinct. Many of the participants expressed a desire to read the thesis to which they have contributed, and asked to be alerted to its publication. While I accept that for some it was a passing comment, there were others for whom I sensed the request was genuine. To this end I have used language, structure and style that, while satisfying academic requirements, will be accessible to those outside of the academic arena.

It is worth nothing that researching Jamaican death rituals was not my original research topic. The reason for the change is explained below.

1.6 From royalty to rituals

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade (Dale Carnegie, 1948)
When presented with unexpected changes, make the most of them.

I was born in Jamaica and emigrated to England when I was 10 years old. In 2013 a DNA test identified the group in Africa from which I am descended as the Tikar people of Cameroon who are located in the English-speaking western region near the border with Nigeria. I spent a very emotional and enlightening month volunteering in one of the non-governmental organisations (Self Reliance Promotors) in Kumbo and following extensive fund-raising to help complete the school in which I had been a volunteer teacher I revisited in 2017. In the intervening years, as well as the fundraising, I wrote and performed a stage play about my experiences in Kumbo with the aim of increasing knowledge of the DNA testing process and of the Tikar people.

My second visit resulted in the very unexpected honour of being conferred with the royal title of Yaa in the kingdom of the Nso people, one of the largest kingdoms in the region. I encountered considerable difficulties gaining coherent information about the royal structure and the privileges and responsibilities of a Yaa in relation to other customs and practices of the Nso people as little is written of these matters, and the word-of-mouth accounts were very confusing. It was for these reasons that I made the offer, at the ceremony in which I was inaugurated into the family, to write a book about the customs and practices of the Nso people. The offer was warmly accepted and I was initially given access to a limited number of papers, with a promise that everything I needed to enable me to write the book would be made available on my return, which was planned for the following year.

Unfortunately, during my second visit there was considerable unrest within the English-speaking region, the result of civil disobedience against the ruling mainly French-speaking government. Tensions had been escalating in intensity for the three weeks of my visit. However, we were optimistic that matters would soon be resolved

and arrangements were made for me to liaise with the director of Self Reliance Promotors, Wirkom Fred Mbiydzenuyuy, over all matters relating to the book.

On my return to the UK a friend and mentor, Chester Morrison, suggested that the research for the book could form the basis of a doctoral thesis from with the book could be extracted. Registration on a PhD programme would enable greater access to a wider range of resources, and further, the resulting title of Dr. would add authority to the book. It was with this project in mind that I applied to, and was accepted into the Ironbridge International Institute of Cultural Heritage (IIICH) at the University of Birmingham to begin my studies in September 2017. However, by November of that year the civil unrest in Cameroon had deteriorated into civil war and I was informed by the university that they could not allow a student to enter a war zone for fieldwork purposes. I therefore had three options: leave the programme; conduct the research in a different country; or identify a new area of research.

The second option was not possible as the Nso people only exist in Cameroon, but by remaining on the programme it was still possible to achieve the title that would add authority to the book when it is written. The challenge was to identify another research topic that would be relevant and in which I would have sufficient drive and interest. Forced to find a new topic or leave the programme I began to focus more intently on conversations I had become aware of in the Jamaican community, and was able to draft a new research proposal which was fortunately accepted. It seems ironic that a research project about the crisis of change was itself the result of crisis and change.

The following chapter is a review of the literature that informs and supports the research in terms of ritual, heritage, national identity and diaspora.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature that informs this study. The main objective of this study as outlined in the introductory chapter was to investigate whether changes to Jamaican death rituals constitute a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the Jamaican UK diaspora, and to determine the causes and consequences of the changes. The three research questions are designed to provide answers that will enable the objectives to be met.

Research questions:

What is the nature and extent of the changes to Jamaican death rituals?
What is causing the changes to the death rituals?
What are the consequences of the changes to the death rituals?

The chapter looks at the literature in relation to conceptualisations of rituals and their applications in the process of death, their use in cultural heritage and in the formation and maintenance of national identity, including in a diasporic context.

It is divided into six sections. Following this brief introduction section 2.2 addresses the ritual concepts and uses that are applicable to this research, and explores previous studies of Jamaican death rituals to locate this study within existing literature. Section 2.3 looks at heritage and its use in constructing national identity, contesting history, and as a process of remembering. Section 2.4 explores the

relationship between heritage and national identity while section 2.5 focuses on the concept of diaspora, the characteristics of diasporic experience and identity, and the use of heritage to maintain national identity in a diaspora context. Section 2.6 is the chapter's conclusion.

These four main concepts are akin to a four-stranded rope where each strand, though separate, is interwoven to create and maintain the integrity of the whole. For this reason, some repetition of the underlying issues as they relate to each is inevitable, but can be seen as a metaphor for the interrelatedness of ritual, heritage, identity, and diaspora. The repetitions have been kept to a minimum and only used where necessary to add clarity and fluidity and to reduce the need for frequent cross-referencing. There are also other theories that inform the research, such as relational dialectic theory, which is used in the context of the extended family concept so valued by the Jamaican government and is discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to its use within the interview process.

The four main concepts of ritual, heritage, identity and diaspora are used widely in both the academy and socially which can be problematic if their specific use is not clarified. Jorgensen notes this difficulty with particular reference to ethnography, a method used for data collection in this study:

> Here, we run into the fact that concepts such as tradition and modernity reflect conceptual difficulties for the social sciences because our own received rhetoric of these terms has become increasingly important to the people we study. In an ethnographic perspective this condition can, however, be turned from a conceptual problem to what Herzfeld has termed "a productive irritant to further insight", as the analytical focus is turned to how concepts such as 'modernity', 'the past' or 'heritage' function as meaningful categories which are used for particular social purposes (Jorgensen 2014 p173).

For each concept I have included definitions of popular use as well as relevant academic and professional definitions, particularly to that of rituals but also to a lesser extent heritage, identity and diaspora.

2.2 Rituals, rites and ceremonies

The field of rituals is extremely diverse and permeates almost every aspect of individual and societal life as they apply to calendrical celebrations, feasting, fasting and festivals, political events such as the British opening of parliament, sporting ceremonies, and celebrations associated with birth, puberty, graduation, marriage and of course death.

According to Wilson

> Rituals reveal values at their deepest level… men express in ritual what moves them most, and since the form of expression is conventionalised and obligatory, it is the value of the group that is revealed. I see in the study of rituals the key to understanding the essential constitution of human societies (Wilson 1954 p240).

She is here talking about public rituals that reveal societal values. There are of course private rituals that are not so easily observed, but when analysed equally reveal what moves an individual most.

At the centre of this study are the rituals surrounding death in Jamaican culture, their role in cultural heritage and national identity, and the effect of changes to the rituals on individuals' perception of their 'Jamaicanness' (Thomas 2004 p2). The working title for the study was originally *Jamaican death rituals*, but I was advised that a change would facilitate a smoother passage through the ethical review process due to the negative connotations of the term 'death rituals'. The research assumed a new

working title: *Jamaican death customs and practices.* I later welcomed the advice as, when speaking about the research to potential participants, many visibly recoiled from the term 'death ritual'. As discussed later in this chapter, their responses related to differing understanding of the term. Clarity about how the term is used in this study was, and is, paramount given its wide range of meanings in both everyday usage and theoretical contexts.

2.2.1 Defining ritual

The early conceptualisations of ritual are rooted in religion, and indeed the Oxford Learners Dictionary (2022 n/p) defines ritual as 'a series of actions that are always performed in the same way, especially as part of a religious ceremony'. Other definitions include 'a set of fixed actions and sometimes words performed regularly, especially as part of a ceremony: also, any act done regularly, usually without thinking about it' (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022 n/p), and 'An act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner, done in accordance with social custom or normal protocol' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022 n/p).

The lay use of the word is therefore associated with repetition, prescribed order, and ceremony, either religious or within other social customs. When prefaced by death it is also associated with killings of the most heinous kind. It is from this understanding of the term that the interviewees recoiled. This research is not concerned with ritualistic killings but with the structural, performative and transitional uses of rituals which surround death.

In the academy ritual is conceptualised as noun, verb and adjective. Early theories of rituals were located in religion and incorporated thoughts and cosmological beliefs as

important components. Emerging out of religion were theories that, while embedded in religion, conceptualised ritual as a verb, that is, they function to hold societies together, and as such extended beyond thoughts and beliefs. They retained their societal cohesive function regardless of beliefs. For example, attending church on Sundays does not require an inherent belief in God, but the act of attending maintains the expectations and order of the society. Theorists such as Robertson-Smith (1889), Durkheim (1912) and Radcliffe-Brown (1952) are noted for advancing this theory of rituals and for many years were unchallenged in this structural/functional approach.

In 1906 Arnold van Gennep, having carried out a meta-analysis of a body of anthropologists' descriptions of cultures in which rituals were featured, observed that rituals of transition such as those associated with births, puberty, marriage and death followed a pattern from which he developed the concept of ritual as a process. His *Rites of Passage* (1906) received little attention until it was translated from French and published in English in 1960. Turner (1967) brought to prominence van Gennep's theory of liminality as the core of transition rituals in his seminal article *Betwixt and between*, and later theorists such as Eisenstadt (1989), Szalkoczai (2000, 2009) Horvath, Thomassen, and Wydra (2015) embraced it as a tool for analysing not just individual life-crisis transition, but national and global crises and transitions. Influential Western anthropologists such as Geertz (1973) and Turner (1967) used ritual as a fundamental tool for defining culture.

Ritual as an adjective was conceptualised by Gluckman (1962,1965) and Edelman (1971) as any repetitive act, regardless of whether they serve a religious or societal function. They cited the repetitive actions observed in political interactions. Grimes (2013) argues that such acts are ritualistic rather than ritual as certain characteristics

must be present for an action to be considered a ritual. These include having a beginning and an end; requiring shared intention and shared attention; take place at specific times; and within specific places; consist of action, objects, language and groups; are preformed regularly in a prescribed matter, and are *symbolic* (Grimes, 2013 p231). It is clear from Grimes' characteristics that his focus is on those rituals that are performed publicly, and does not include more private ritualistic behaviour. Bell (2009, p5) maintains that 'critical analysis of a theoretical perspective must look not only to the logic of the set of ideas under scrutiny, but also to the history of their construction', and offers an excellent history of the construction of ritual theory in *Ritual theory, ritual practice*. This dissertation, having limited space, focuses mainly on the concepts of ritual that directly inform the research and enable analysis of the data. These are structural functional theory, process theory and cultural analysis theory including the symbolic use of rituals. Structural functional theory was used to determine the consequences of the changes in societal and community terms. Process theory was used to ascertain the nature and extent of the changes to the rituals and cultural analysis theory to assess the cultural impact of the changes. Application of these main concepts are used to interrogate the interrelatedness of the three research questions, as well as to uncover more subtle nuances of the research findings.

Structural functional theory. Structural functional theory of ritual is concerned with the ways in which rituals are used as agents of structure in societies and is largely credited to theorists such as Durkheim (1912), Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and Levi-Strauss (1963). Durkheim's influence on ritual theory has proved particularly robust and is used here as religion is integral to most of Jamaica's death rituals. He also interpreted rituals, in respect of their social function, as a way of binding people

together in the community, through the medium of religion. Durkheim's book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* contains the most influential elements of his theories on ritual including those associated with his categorisation of religion into beliefs and rites where beliefs are states of opinions, and rites are 'particular modes of action' (Durkheim 1912 p34). Durkheim strongly emphasised that religions are never just a matter of belief. It is not beliefs that hold communities together, it is rituals as it is possible for individuals to participate in rituals regardless of their beliefs, and furthermore, when practised collectively rituals foster a heightened sense of group solidarity. His work continues to be influential in both the study or religion and sociology. For example, Onipede and Phillips' (2021) research investigates the Ode festival role in fostering identity and solidarity among the Yoruba people, and Johnson's (2022) investigates the religious values within death rituals in Chicago.

Durkheim further categorised belief into what he called the sacred and the profane. 'The "sacred" is essentially anything that the society agrees is sacred, and can include beliefs, myths, dogmas, and legends, but can also include physical items such as rocks, trees, pieces of wood, pebbles, houses or springs' (Durkheim, 1912 pages 34-35), and the setting aside of something as sacred is similar to the process employed in constructing heritage, as will be discussed in section 2.4. Essentially, what is sacred is also 'representative', or 'symbolic'. The profane on the other hand is literal, the ordinary mundane things in life that have not been given sacred meanings. As both sacred and profane are created by the belief system of the society they are not fixed and can change when the society changes its beliefs, the profane can become sacred and the sacred fall from grace into the realm of the profane (Durkheim, 1912 p37). Thus, religions allow for change, with changes in beliefs resulting in changes to rituals. In examining any changes in rituals it is therefore

essential to address underlying changes in beliefs which are an important issue for this study.

Another feature of Durkheim's definition of the sacred and the profane is the concept of prohibition. 'Sacred things are things protected and isolated by prohibitions; profane things are those things to which the prohibitions are applied and that must be kept at a distance from what is sacred' (Durkheim, 1912 p38). Mbiti (1981) and Parrinder (1978) offer a valuable comparison of African traditional religions and Christianity and their conceptualisation of the sacred and the profane in relation to death rituals, a helpful approach to analysing Jamaican death rituals, which are influenced by both. Durkheim's conceptualisation of death rituals is based on a complex set of rites which seeks to bring about the separation of the bereaved from the deceased and prevent unsanctioned mixing and contact due to the possibility of 'contagiousness of the sacred' by the profane (Durkheim, 1912 p324). This concept of rituals of contagion is further developed by Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and danger* (1966) and her description of the dangers of contact with corpses reflect Rastafari's initial reluctance to engage with corpses as discussed by Chevannes (1994). Rudiments of this concept of 'pollution ritual' are observable in some Jamaican death rituals as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition to binding the society in worship, rituals were acknowledged by the prominent European anthropologists at the time to be essential to the various life and social transitions within a society – for example, birth, puberty, marriage and death. In almost all societies, ritual and ceremonial procedures are observed on such occasions, and in small traditional cultures, Durkheim argued, almost all aspects of life are permeated by religion, a view reinforced by Mbiti (1981) and Parrinder (1978) in their accounts of African religions. It was on the transitional characteristic of ritual

that Arnold van Gennep constructed his highly influential theory of ritual as a process in his book *Rites of Passage* (1960), in which he argued that ritual not only acknowledged the transitions in life, but was integral to the process.

Arnold van Gennep acknowledges that rituals, or as he refers to them, rites, are applied to changes of social states in individuals' lives, thus, they become the rituals of transition, of passage from one state to another, rites which accompany every change of place, social position and age. He argued, from his meta-analysis of the available data, that all societies mark these changes in some way and the rites are the ceremonies performed at these state changes. Throughout the book he uses the terms rites, rituals and ceremonies interchangeably. As he conceptualised rites of passage, the passage from one state to another occurs in three stages, namely *separation*, which is signified by the detachment of the individual or the group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure; *transition*, which is an ambiguous state in which the individual is neither one thing or the other, no longer the old self and not yet the new self; and *incorporation*, in which the individual is welcomed back into the society in the new state or position. A contemporary example is that of a couple who become engaged to be married. Prior to engagement both parties occupy a 'single' status. At the point of engagement, which may be celebrated with a (ceremonial) party, they are separated from the other single individuals, but, as they are not yet married their engagement is the transition period. At the point of marriage, which entails another ritual ceremony, they are incorporated into the society in a 'married' status. In the UK and in Jamaica there is no legal status for engaged couples. Van Gennep noted that not all stages are developed to the same extent in all societies and in all ceremonial patterns. For instance,

> Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group (van Gennep, 1960; 2019, p11).

The rites of transition he called 'liminal' rites, and the term refers to the space between the start of the event and the end. On completion of the transition, that is, when adolescents are returned to society as men or women, or when the engaged couple is returned as man and wife, van Gennep conceptualises that a 'threshold' has been crossed into the next state. With regard to rituals of death van Gennep emphasised the importance of the liminal space, particularly between the perceived dangers inherent in death, and a return to the profane normality following the funeral ritual. The dangers of death he observed are associated with contamination from the corpse, the malevolent influence of the deceased spirit, and the disruption of the social order of the family and society. He also recognised the period of mourning as particularly significant in a liminal sense.

> During mourning, the living mourners and the deceased constitute a special group, situated between the world of the living and the world of the dead, and how soon the living individuals leave the group depends on the closeness of their relationship with the dead person (van Gennep, 1960 p147).

This study uses liminality as an analytical concept, particularly as one of the concerns of the changes to the rituals expressed anecdotally by some individuals relates to the lengthening time between death and disposal of the corpse by burial.

Van Gennep's translation of *Rites of Passage* (1960) into English brought it to the attention of the academic community but also to the wider society. In his introduction to the 2019 edition Kertzer (2019, pxxix) notes that in the decades that followed the English version 'hundreds of anthropological works appeared in the Anglophone

world making use of it. None more influential than the writings of Mary Douglas (1966) and Victor Turner (1967), both of whom built on van Gennep's concept of the middle, liminal stage'.

Its popularity in the academy, as noted by Kertzer, was helped significantly by the interest of Victor Turner (1967) who embraced and developed the liminal element, bringing van Gennep's concept to a much wider audience. Turner's seminal paper *Betwixt and Between* (1967) is devoted to a discussion of the nature of this period of the ritual, which he applied to his study of the Ndembu people of Zambia. Other aspects of Turner's work with the Ndembu people, as discussed in Chapter 5, also provided a useful analytical framework for this study, particularly in relation to the symbolism of rituals.

The concept of *Rites of passage* has also been influential in other disciplines including folklore, religion, sociology, psychology, history, archaeology and heritage, leading Padilla, in *Rites of passage in Ancient Greece,* to observe that the concept 'remains an astonishingly stable and useful paradigm to this day' (Padilla, 1999 p15-16). Gibbons, Ross, and Bevans (2014) and Fay (2019) are examples of the contemporary use of *Rites of Passage*.

Rites of passage is a term that is also widely used outside of academia, as any internet search engine will verify. Kertzer notes that the term has 'become ubiquitous well beyond the scholarly world… from the 1980 Booker Prize-winning book by William Golding, *Rites of Passage*, to the latest copies of daily newspapers' (Kertzer 2019 pxxxv). This ubiquity Turner (1967 p94) attributes to the fact that rites of passage are 'not confined to culturally defined life-crisis but may accompany any change from one state to another', and it is this aspect that has been applied by

Eisenstadt (1985) Horvath et al (2015) and Ryzova (2022) as a tool of analysis to explore different problems at the intersection of anthropology and political science. They have applied the concept of liminality 'to various concrete cases of transformation in social and political environments' (Horvath et al, 2015 p1).

This study uses van Gennep's conceptualisation of ritual as a process, in relation to the 'transitional period for the survivors' in death rituals, (van Gennep 1960, (p147) and as an analytical tool in addressing broader national and global crises. As discussed below, the study also uses the cultural analysis conceptualisation of ritual for wider societal analysis of the data.

Ritual as cultural analysis is a theme highlighted by Bell (2009) in her review of ritual theory. She notes that where many myth-and-ritual theorists looked to ritual to describe religion (Taylor, 1871; Smith, 1889; Frazer, 1911), and social functionalists explored ritual in order to analyse society (Durkheim, 1912; Malinowski, 1922; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952), 'more recently symbolic anthropologists have found ritual to be fundamental to the dynamics of culture' (Bell, 2009 p14). She cites Clifford Geertz (1973) and Victor Turner (1967) among the symbolic anthropologists whose use of culture as a category for analysing rituals 'fuelled the emergence of a focus on ritual itself in the cross-disciplinary endeavour of ritual studies' (Bell, 2009 p15). It is from this that the extensive use of ritual in cultural analysis emerged, as observed by Kertzer (2019).

Marcus and Fisher (1986) note that description and analysis of ritual were made popular by the likes of Geertz and Turner due to the public nature of rituals, and the ease of extrapolating meaning from the descriptions and analysis. It was this interpretive use, alongside the publication of *Rites of passage* that helped to promote

the study of ritual in diverse areas such as ‘communication theory, theatre studies, and social psychology’ (Bell, 2009 p15-16). Jamaican death rituals, however, are not always public. Hausner (2016) in looking at the performance of ritual identity among Gurungs in Europe, distinguishes between ritual practice which is private and ritual performance which is public. ‘Ritual practice thus may be seen as conducted by the self, while ritual performance is understood as conducted for others’ (Hausner, 2016 p99). The difference she proposes lies in the lens of the analyst, not the practitioner, and is a useful conceptualisation for addressing the transformations in the Jamaican private and public death rituals that are both practised and performed. The literature on Jamaican death rituals is not extensive, and where it exists it is mainly focused on the public rituals of funerals and burials (Chevannes, 1998; Senior, 2003) and due to its perceived demise more recently, nine-nights (Williams, 2015; Gordon, 2018; Richards, 2021). There has been only one in-depth study of Jamaican death rituals that addresses the ritual of nine-night (Richards 2021) and scant analysis of the private rituals, which this study aims to rectify.

Both Geertz’s work on cultural analysis of rituals (Geertz, 1973) and Turner’s work on symbols (Turner, 1967) have informed this research. Geertz in terms of his emphasis on thick description in analysing field data, and Turner’s work on the symbols of rituals which are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In defining rituals as adjectives, ritualization is the term frequently used for focusing on ritual in technologically advanced societies, with ritual applied to the less technologically developed groups (Bell, 2009). It came out of the work of Gluckman (1962) who used it as a contrast to the traditional connection with organised religious institutions and formal religious practice, what he called ‘ritualism’, and the actions that went on in social, political and personal relationships. This inspired a range of

sociological literature on ritualization in non-religious frameworks such as Elderman's (1971) study of ritualization in political conflicts, and Battie's (1966) examination of the use of rituals for social change. It is included here as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) speak of ritualization as a way of 'inventing traditions' in modern societies, a concept discussed later in section 2.3 in relation to national identity, and one which is seen in the invention and assimilation of new death rituals in the two Jamaican communities.

The widening application of rituals to a variety of disciplines resulted in the development of a distinct area of academic study (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Grimes 1982, 1984, 1987), and the expansive theoretical use of rituals means that it is now applied to describe

> Situations as disparate as e.g. the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca; the repetitive behaviour of young children before going to sleep; the recitation of a magical incantation or formula; participation in a Thanksgiving dinner; the compulsive actions of an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) patient; military rules for standing, walking, saluting; and many others (Boyer, P. and Lienard, P. 2020 p1).

Among this widening application of ritual are those which have negative associations.

There are positive and negative aspects of rituals which in the literature on death ritual falls mainly into two categories. The first presents a neutral or positive account of cultural or religious customs and practices and usually has death in the title, for example, *Celebrations of death* (Metcalf and Huntington, 1991) and *Death, ritual and belief* (Davies, 1997). The second focuses on the negative aspects of death rituals and is usually associated with ritualistic killings. Penner (2016) suggests that the difference is due to classification of rituals as either positive or negative. Positive rituals are concerned with consecrating or renewing an object or an individual e.g.,

christening a baby, marriage, or graduation; while negative rituals are desecrating and destructive. There are also ‘sacrificial’ rituals which can be divided into two subtypes. 1) Those in which the participants benefit from the sacrifice. For instance, where an animal is sacrificed and the participants are allowed to eat the flesh, or where the benefits are for the whole community, such as a sacrifice for rain during a drought. 2) Those in which the participant(s) is/are the sacrifice. For example, where one or more of the participants are killed. There are, of course rituals where the two conflate such as sacrificing one member to benefit the whole community.

This polarity of qualities of ritual is an important aspect to this study as, despite its prevalence, death is still taboo in some parts of Jamaican culture, particularly when it is considered to have been caused by obeah practitioners. Obeah, as discussed in Chapter 3 is a form of spiritual practice with its origins in African spirituality which can be used to heal or to harm, and it is the latter element that is feared.

The association of death rituals with ritual killings also formed the basis of the advice to amend the title for the ethical review process, in this case not because of obeah but because of media reporting of ritual killings of children in the UK (Goddard, 2016; Dantiye, 2022) as well as films dealing with ritual killings, *Ritual, Tales from the Crypt* (2002) and *The Ritual* (2017) being two examples.

The focus of this study is not ritualised killing, it is concerned with death rituals as forms of intangible cultural heritage and the consequences of changes to their performance on national identity. The study therefore integrates the conceptualisations of rituals discussed in this chapter to the analysis of the research. The following section looks at the concept of heritage and its interrelatedness with rituals.

2.3 Heritage

Heritage, like the other concepts used in this study has academic as well as generalised social and professional definitions. The Oxford English Dictionary (2020 n/p) offers a three-part definition:

- Property that is or may be inherited such as physical artefacts, family heirlooms, buildings and land;
- valued things such as historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations;
- things of historic and cultural value that are worthy of preservation.

Parts one and two of the definition which conceptualise heritage as material possession, whether artefacts, buildings or land, are also widely reflected in academic literature (Hewison, 1987; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; Carman, 2002; Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013), and such tangible possessions have been at the heart of international heritage discourse. The third part of the definition which includes things of cultural value was brought more tentatively into the discourse following formal recognition as heritage non-material elements of a society's culture, the intangible cultural heritage, by the United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). According to Alivisatou (2012 p13) the UNESCO definition is 'the most salient instrument defining intangible heritage'.

> The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003 Article 2 S1.2).

Despite these wide acceptances of heritage definitions Smith, in her highly influential book *Uses of heritage,* asserts that there is no such thing as 'heritage' (Smith, 2006 p13). She goes on to clarify that by this she means that there is nothing that is inherently 'heritage'. Heritage, she argues, is defined by its use, which may be economic, social, cultural, or political. Individuals or groups decide what heirlooms to pass down, what buildings to preserve and what artefacts to exhibit based on the version of the past to be remembered.

That heritage is not synonymous with history, but is rather constructed from elements of history, is widely represented in the literature. Heritage uses history to fulfil particular contemporary needs. Harrison (2013 p14), citing Walsh 1992; Harvey, 2001, 2008 and Smith, 2006 notes that heritage is not a thing but 'a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past', and although concerned with the past, heritage is created in the present, a view also shared by Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996 p20; Lowenthal, 2004 p19-23; and Graham and Howard, 2008 p1). Individuals, organisations and governments may wish to, and often change that relationship with the past.

The nature of the relationship with the past is determined by the 'work' that heritage is required to do (Smith, 2006 p44). Tunbridge and Ashford note that heritage is 'purposefully developed in response to the current needs or demands for it, and shaped by those requirements' Tunbridge and Ashford (1996 p6). They assert that one aspect of the work that heritage is required to do is to maintain generational continuity, and that this is achieved by a process whereby 'the present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future' Tunbridge and Ashford (1996 p6). Here there are

echoes of Anderson’s (1983, 2016) conceptualisation of the past as imagined which is discussed in relation to national identity in the following section.

Within the academy heritage is also conceptualised as a process (Smith, 2006). Visits to museums, participation in memorial events and historic re-enactments require the process of remembering, of recalling what was and relating it to the present. Heritage is also about the process of connecting to such emotions as pride and honour in oneself and one’s society, or the process of inducing shame or projecting anger or dishonour towards others. Marschall (2008 p347) describes heritage as ‘a process of conscious, purposeful remembrance for the political, cultural, or economic needs in the present’.

2.3.1 Uses of heritage

The different ways in which heritage is used, and some would argue misused, is covered extensively in the literature (Wright, 1985; Lowenthal, 1989; Carman, 2002; Smith, 2006, 2009, 2019) and is strongly influenced by what Smith (2006) calls Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD). This includes uses of and conceptualisations of heritage in a national context, but it also recognises the role of UNESCO in international heritage management, conservation and perseveration. In 2006 Smith claimed that the heritage discourse in these contexts was driven by Western ideas of heritage, that is, artefacts, buildings, monuments and sites, and dominated by academic experts, either self-designated or appointed by governments. These experts determine what heritage is, i.e., they authorise what is worthy of preservation for future generations. Despite the formal international recognition of intangible elements of heritage in 2003 with the introduction of UNESCO’s *Convention on*

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage the main heritage discourse in 2022 remains that of AHD. Yet outside of the dominance of the UNESCO framework there remains the opportunity for heritage to be identified by individuals within their community, what Robertson (2008 p143) calls ‘heritage from below’ and there are notable examples of this in the UK, particularly in industrial heritage. In Jamaica reggae, Rastafari and ‘dance hall' dances are examples of ‘heritage from below’.

The most relevant uses of heritage to this study relate to creating and maintaining identity, both personal and national, contesting history, and as a process of remembering.

2.3.2 Using heritage to construct identity

One of the main uses of heritage is the development and legitimisation of identity and as such the association between heritage and identity is well established in heritage literature (Gilroy, 1993; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; Hall, 1999; Smith, 2006; Graham and Howard, 2008; Smith and Akagawa, 2009). Indeed, heritage is seen as a symbolic representation of identity (Crouch and Parker, 2003; Smith, 2006; Graham and Howard, 2008) and is used in the process of constructing and maintaining personal and national identities. As Graham et al. point out (2000, p183):

> …nationalism and national heritage developed synchronously in nineteenth-century Europe. The nation-state required national heritage to consolidate national identification, absorb or neutralize potentially competing heritages of social-cultural groups or regions, combat the claims of other nations upon its territory or people, while furthering claims upon nationals in territories elsewhere.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Jamaica, like so many newly created nation-states emerging from the experience of colonisation, employed heritage in the construction

of its identity. One of the challenges for nation states such as Jamaica, other islands in the Caribbean, and many of the African states, was a lack of built heritage, the monuments and edifices which were the pillars of European heritage. Even where they were present they related, in most cases, to the heritage of the colonisers. Marschall (2008) in *The Heritage of Post-Colonial societies* notes that such societies tend to be preoccupied with defining a new identity for which only 'selected aspects of the past understood as heritage serve as inspiration or foundation' for future heritage (Marschall, 2008 p347). The emphasis here is on selection, as not everything from the past will be considered desirable to 'represent' the new nation. Some aspects of the previous colonial identity will simply be omitted, such as the colonisers commemoration holidays, while other aspects will be subjected to another of the uses of heritage, that of contestation. This use of heritage is of paramount importance to this study as it investigates the conflict between British post-colonial heritage and African heritage being experienced as identity crisis for Jamaicans.

2.3.3 Using heritage to contest history

Post-colonial societies tend to have an ambiguous relationship to their colonial heritage (Marschall, 2008 p349). The immediate post-independence years are usually marked by the removal of evidence of the oppressive symbols of the regime such as statues and monuments, and replacing them with symbols of the new socio-political order. Renaming of countries, cities, buildings, monuments and other places is common. For example, the renaming of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, and Pretoria to Harare. Marschall (2008 p350) gives an excellent selection of the diverse ways in which changes have been made in post-colonial countries. The literature on

Jamaica's inception as a nation-state record no grand removal of statutes and edifices (Chevannes, 1998; Nettleford, 1998; Cummings, 2012). Unlike the African countries from which Jamaicans are descended, there was no past heritage to revert to, no reclaiming of past names and sacred grounds.

The challenge for Jamaica and other nations in the Caribbean was the construction of a heritage from a region where, as Cummings (2012 p26) notes '(virtually) everyone came from (virtually) everywhere else, whether voluntarily or by force'. Jamaica created new national heroes based on their involvement in the fight for freedom, first from slavery and later from colonialism. Places such as Sam Sharpe Square in Montego Bay, and Heroes Park in Kingston were named after these heroes, and statues were erected to them. New holidays and ceremonies which were created to commemorate the heroes which rapidly became part of Jamaica's heritage (Senior, 2003). Jamaica, not endowed with huge quantities of built heritage retain much of the British intangible cultural heritage to the chagrin of many Jamaicans who had expected a more prominent positioning of Jamaican ICH in creating the nation's national identity (Nettleford, 1998). What was retained of the built heritage left by the colonisers such as the plantation houses, churches and civic buildings became the focus of Jamaica's heritage tourism (Buckley, 2010 p50).

The AHD process was employed by the new government who appointed experts and made decisions about the nature of Jamaica's heritage. As Marschall (2008 p354) notes, with reference to a wider postcolonial context, 'Inspired by colonial practice, state-sponsored heritage could be utilized to define, endorse and publicly disseminate the new identity construct and accompanying value systems'. As noted above, not everyone in Jamaica endorsed the new identity, which is not unusual in new or even established nations. Contesting state-sponsored heritage is widely

discussed in the literature (Wright, 1985; Hewison, 1981,1987; Smith, 2006). In Jamaica the greatest resistance to the official heritage disseminated by the government came from the Rastafari movement who considered the new Jamaican nation-state too closely aligned to the values of the British colonialists (Chevannes, 1994, 1998; Hutton and Murrell, 1998; Nettleford, 1998). They wanted more emphasis to be placed on the African aspects of culture and presented, and continue to present, what Smith (2006 p37) calls a 'competing conceptualization of heritage'. The role of Rastafari in contesting Jamaica's heritage has had significant impact on death rituals as discussed in chapters 7 and 8, not least due to their effective use of remembering and promoting Jamaica's African connections.

2.3. 4 Using heritage as a process of remembering.

Smith (2006) in conceptualising heritage as a process, purports that the very sifting and sorting of what is to become heritage is a process which involves memory, and the process of remembering is both an individual and a collective activity. In *Memory, museums and the making of meanings: a Caribbean perspective* Cummings discusses Jamaican museums and argues that the history of the region is not defined by its tangible remains which can be exhibited in museums. The history of the region is defined by its intangible, shared, experiences of slavery and colonisation which are extracted from collective memory to create national identities (Cummings, 2012 p26). This is the aspect of heritage that is evoked at commemoration events such as independence days, heroes or saints' days, and the commemoration of battles. Memory as heritage is employed extensively in ICH in the form of oral history. Smith (2006) describes the importance of oral history as heritage to the Waanyi women of

Australia. 'What was interesting for us was that for the Waanyi women these oral histories were perceived to be as much their heritage as the sites we had intended to record' (Smith, 2006 p46). This study employed oral history within the interviews to capture aspects of the rituals that were previously unrecorded.

2.3.5 The literature on Jamaican intangible cultural heritage

The literature on Jamaican intangible cultural heritage has focused mainly on its artforms of music and dance (Nettleford, 1969, 1985) sport (Moore, 2015) and on its religions (Chevannes, 1994; Beckford, 1998, 2000). In a report prepared by Griffith and Emmanuel (2005) for The National Environmental Societies Trust in Jamaica to address the most effective ways of protecting heritage and culture, recommendations were made to

> protect all aspects of intangible heritage, establish strong community involvement in management approach and activities, and conduct and provide opportunities for research, education and public appreciation' of intangible heritage (Griffith and Emmanuel, 2005 p58).

While there have been inscriptions of the Maroons way of life and of Reggae music on the *UNESCO Representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity*, (2008; 2018) and submission of the Jamaican Revival religion for inscription (2019), the literature has not specifically addressed the practices surrounding death as intangible cultural heritage. This study aims to apply a broader definition of ICH, from specific discrete activities which can be easily ring-fenced and safeguarded, to ritual activities that are embedded in the day-to-day fabric of the culture.

The study is underpinned by UNESCO's definition of ICH as something that is transmitted from generation to generation. Given that almost everything passed from

one generation to another can be deemed ICH, Tunbridge and Ashford's definition of the process of selection of heritage is applied to the death rituals, that is:

> The present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future' (Tunbridge and Ashford, 1996 p6).

This research aims to investigate the significance of death rituals as a specific inheritance, from a past that is imagined in the sense that no participant in the research commands full knowledge of all of the past. It tries to answer questions in the present about a future that is uncertain, and can only be imagined.

In the following section the ways in which heritage is used to develop and maintain national identity is explored.

2.4 National identity

This section explores the concept of national identity in order to locate this study in a wider theoretical framework. It begins with a discussion of the mechanisms for creating nation states and gives a brief overview of patriotism and nationalism in relation to national identity, both of which are essential to understanding the historical development of Jamaica as a nation state.

2.4.1 Nation, nation-state and national identity

Constructing, and maintaining national identity, as mentioned earlier, is one of the main uses of heritage but it also finds expression in archaeology (Seonaid, 2018), sociology (Chernilo, 2020), cultural studies (Turner, 2021), psychology (Sapolsky,

2019), and religion (Soper and Fetzer, 2018). In fact, wherever people are being discussed in terms of where they were born, live, work and die. It is the thread that is woven throughout this research and as such is explored in some depth. It is, however, not possible to consider national identity without first addressing the concept of nation.

The academic discourse of nation and national identity is influenced significantly by the concepts of Anderson (1983; 2016) and Smith (1991). Although they approach national identity from different theoretical stances as will be discussed below, aspects of both conceptualisations of nation and national identity are applicable to Jamaica as a nation state. Anderson argues that a nation is constructed using tools such as boundaries, political ideology and heritage. He defines nation as 'an imagined community' and maintains that nations are political constructions 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them. Yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 2016 p6).

This imagined nation is made possible by political leaders' use of the media which began with the widespread availability of newspapers, and is sustained by the proliferation of other media outlets such as radio, television, and more recently the internet and social platforms. People are made aware of what other members of the nation are doing via these media and so imagine themselves to be part of the community despite the fact they will never meet or interact with most of the other members of the nation. As technology becomes more sophisticated and the 'nation' is spread more globally, no longer sharing the same land mass, as in the case of diasporas such as that of the Jamaicans in the UK, the nation becomes even more imagined.

Another tool employed in the construction of new nations is what Kershen calls 'the cartographer's boundaries' (Kershen, 1998 p2) where a nation is defined within certain land limits. This was the method used to create some post-colonial nations in Asia and Africa such as Pakistan, Rwanda and Cameroon. Such nations have struggled with issues of identity because one of the issues Smith (1991) places at the centre of nation was not sufficiently considered, that of culture.

While agreeing that nations are not a naturally occurring phenomenon Smith believes that nation creation is more than lines drawn on a map. He suggests that nations and national identity are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated 'ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic, legal and political' components (Smith, 1991 p15). Smith posits that there are two routes to nation creation, cultural and civic, both of which are discussed in section 2.2.6 on nationalism, and both of which are relevant to the creation and recreation of Jamaican national identity.

The literature on nation and nation states is located predominantly in political science but is increasingly found in other disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology, and is particularly evident in heritage studies as it relates to the use of heritage to construct national identity (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; Smith, 2006;). The extent to which members of a nation form affinity with its ideologies and culture is often expressed in patriotism and/or nationalism.

For Sefton-Watson (1977 p5) 'A nation exists when a significant number of people in a community considers themselves to form a nation; or behave as if they formed one.'

2.4.2 Patriotism

Patriotism is defined by Lexico as 'devotion to and vigorous support for one's country' (2021). Anderson (2016 p141) suggests that one of the reasons for the attachment individuals feel for 'the inventions of their imaginations' is that they fall in love with their nations. It accounts for the 'near pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other and it's affinities with racism'. This he claims is self-sacrificing love, and notes it is expressed in the cultural products of nations such as music, poetry, fiction, and art. He challenges the reader to find cultural expressions of hate towards individuals or objects, even in nations that have experienced subjugation and colonisation (Anderson, 2016 pp141-142). These are issues pertinent to Jamaicans both in the homeland and in the diaspora (Thomas, 2004). This Other is not fixed and as Mandler (2006, page 291) notes, 'when one Other loses its relevance another has to be found'.

2.4.3 Nationalism

Where patriotism is the positive expression of the love of the nation, nationalism is its negative sibling, which seeks to exclude others from the nation on grounds of difference, often through the use of discrimination and violence. Both patriotism and nationalism are results of the way in which nations are created, for whom, and for what purpose. In his book *National Identity* Smith (1991) discusses nation creation as a precursor to understanding the concept of national identity; it seems pertinent to do the same here.

Smith argues that nations are created via two routes: cultural and civic. In the cultural or 'dominant *ethnie*' route, the culture of the core ethnic community becomes the

main pillar of the new national political identity. Where there is no dominant group or where there is subjugation of the dominant *ethnie* through occupation and/or colonisation the second civic route is used. This involves establishing legal, educational, health and other civic structures to represent the created ideology. The nation's identity is developed from members' willingness to engage with the official ideologies. Fukuyama (2018 p8) attributes Canada, the United States, and India to this form of creation. Jamaica, as will be discussed in the following chapter, is a hybrid of these two systems, and is an important contributor to the ambivalence and complexity of its national identity. Although Jamaica is, by its majority ethnic make-up, an ethnie nation, the founding government at independence used the civic route to establish the nation's political identity, to enable the inclusion of the other minority ethnic groups. This continues to be one of the causes of cultural ambivalence among Jamaicans as some Jamaicans perceived this as a subjugation of the dominant group (Nettleford, 1998; Johnson, 2019).

The creation of nations shares a similar pathway to the creation of heritage in the sense that government officials and other experts decide the nature and purpose of the nation and communicate it to the population. Heritage plays a significant role in the construction of nations because nation building requires tradition, a way of demonstrating the longevity of the group of would-be nationals. Such traditions may indeed be steeped in a long history, but where that is absent, it is simply invented: as noted by Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983 p1), 'traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented'. Within this he includes traditions which are purposefully invented, or re-constructed and formally instituted such as the Royal Christmas broadcast in the UK; and those that become known as

‘tradition’ through their frequent use, such as football songs and other rituals associated with British football, including violence and racial abuse of Black players.

Another frequently used tool in nation construction is language, in written and oral arts and particularly the national anthem, which Smith claims is one of the most powerful means of evoking feelings of love for the nation when sung publicly. ‘No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses and the same melody’ (Smith, 1991 p145). He labours the point that nations are not formed in blood but in language, and in that way ‘it is possible for others to be “invited into” the imagined community’ (Smith, 1991 P145). Singing national anthems and reading and watching the news are thus rituals that reinforce national identity.

Language is of particular relevance to Jamaica which is predominantly an *ethnie* nation with over 90% of the population of Black African origin. Although many of the Africans who were brought to Jamaica and enslaved spoke their own language, as they were not from a homogenous group, they developed a language commonly referred to as Jamaican patois from the syncretism of their various languages and English, the language of the slave masters. Patois is widely spoken in Jamaica and by many Jamaicans in the UK diaspora. However, with a motto of ‘Out of many one people’ it seeks to invite others into the nation through the use of the colonisers’ language of English. As will be discussed in Chapter 7 the issue of formal recognition of Jamaican patois as a language to be taught in schools is still a contested matter (Devonish, 2016). Although establishing borders, as observed by Kershen (1998), is an essential tool in nation creation, it is less so for island nations such as Jamaica where territorial borders are clearly defined. Such borders are, however, increasingly permeated by Jamaica’s large diasporas and their frequent movement between the

homeland and host nation. Indeed, there is a growing group of Jamaicans from the UK, US and Canadian diasporas who divide their time equally between the homeland and the diaspora. This fluidity of movement has forced a redefinition of the Jamaican nation as outlined by the Jamaican prime minister Portia Simpson Miller in her address to the diaspora conference in 2006, as noted by Franklyn:

> In this age of globalization we have to re-define the concept of the nation. The nation today is not territorial, it is not bound by physical space. The nation is a social and political construct. It is a boundless world, a nation no longer confined by geography. There are 2.6 million people in the country but there are approximately another 2.6 million residing overseas' Franklyn, 2010 p46).

This study tests the concept of Jamaica as a global nation by conducting the research in the UK and in Jamaica, and also employs relational dialectic theory in the analysis of the data to broaden the concept of the diaspora as the extended family.

Smith (1991) suggests that there are six main attributes of *ethnie* communities; a collective proper name; a myth of common ancestry; shared historical memories; one or more differentiating elements of common culture; an association with a specific homeland; and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. He argues that the more a given population possesses or shares these attributes, the more closely it approximates with an *ethnie* nation. These, as discussed in 2.5 have much in common with the attributes of diaspora (Cohen, 1997; Sanfran, 2004) and can be applied equally to the Jamaican nation and to the diaspora in the UK.

2.4.4 Defining national identity

Defining national identity encounters similar challenges to the other concepts discussed in this chapter. In 2006 Mandler (p281) observed that if 'identity' is

important by its elusive quality, then ‘national identity’ is even more so. One strategy Mandler (2006, p290) suggests for dealing with the complexity of the term is to ‘tease out a single strand or symbol of “nation” and follow it across time, place and genre’. It is precisely what this study does, the single strand being death rituals as it relates to point four of Smith’s (1991) attributes, ‘one or more differentiating elements of common culture’. While some aspects of Jamaica’s national characteristics have been extensively researched, particularly music, dance and its diasporic communities (Nettleford, 1969, 1985); sport (Moore, 2015) and on its religions (Chevannes, 1994; Beckford, 1998, 2000), the subject of death rituals has received little attention. Phillips (2014), in his book *How Great Thou Art* presents commentary to accompany 50 years of photographs of Black funerals in London and its environs. Although the funerals are not exclusively Jamaican, Jamaica is well represented. Some are easily distinguishable by use of the Jamaican flag or the colours of the flag. The ritual of nine-night has also received recent attention (Williams, 2015; Gordon, 2018; Richards, 2021), but the collective range of rituals has not been researched.

The issue of national identity receives much government attention, and many hours are spent researching and writing about the national identity of individual nation states, or providing an overview of the concept, its application and its changing nature (Gray and McEachem, 2003). The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) which was established in 1984 to conduct surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences has 45 members and contains a module which looks specifically at national identity. The survey questions

> Mainly deal with issues, such as respondents’ global, national or ethnic identification, aspects of national pride and support for their own nation, attitudes towards national and international issues, attitudes towards foreigners and foreign cultures, and views on what makes someone a true member of one’s own nationality (Gesis, 2013 n/p).

To date three large scale studies have been conducted in the member countries (Gesis, 1995, 2003, 2013). The questions used in the survey, which are relatively consistent with Smith's definition of an *ethnie* nation, indicate the attributes that these nations consider important to their national identity. The respondents' answers are a good indication of their willingness to allow outsiders into the nation. This is of particular relevance for the Jamaican diaspora in the UK where a reluctance by the host nation to welcome others from 'out-groups' has been well documented (Phillips and Phillips, 1998; Gilroy, 2002; Ologusa, 2016; BBC, 2018a).

In the UK the studies, conducted in 1995, 2003, and 2013 as the *British Social Attitudes* survey asks respondents how important a series of attributes are to being considered truly British. These include: to have been born in Britain; to have British citizenship; to have lived in Britain for most of one's life; to be able to speak English; to be a Christian; to respect Britain's political institutions and laws; to feel British; to have British ancestry. An additional question about minority groups aims to assess the extent to which shared customs and traditions matter, and require respondents to agree or disagree: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is impossible for people who do not share Britain's customs and traditions to become fully British.

Analysis of the results of the survey is carried out using ethnic and civic criteria with five questions assessed as *ethnie* and three as civic.

Fukuyama (2018) in *Why National Identity Matters* posits six reasons, as discussed in Chapter 1. They are: for physical security, good government, economic development, to develop trust between 'in-group' members and outsiders, to encourage the development and maintenance of strong social safety nets, and to

make possible liberal democracy. He does, however, acknowledge that democracy is not necessary for strong social identity, but rather that there is a shared belief in the legitimacy of the nation's political system. There are, others (Smith, 1991; Rutland, 2022) who argue that when national identity becomes nationalism, accommodation of outsiders is scarcely tolerated, as was the case in Nazi Germany, the Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia, the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, and Jamaicans and other immigrants in the UK.

What this study benefits from is Fukuyama's assertion that identity, including national identity, is rooted in *thymus*, 'Plato's term for the aspects of human soul that is experienced emotionally though feelings of pride, shame and anger that craves recognition of dignity' (Fukuyama, 2018 p11). This is of immense relevance to Jamaican national identity, formed as it is from enslaved and colonialised peoples, and with particular resonance to those living as a diaspora in the UK (Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1999; Safran, 2004).

As indicated earlier there is considerable intersectionality between national identity and diaspora issues, particularly formation of diaspora and their lived experiences in host countries. The issues relating to diasporas are addressed in the following section.

2.5 Diaspora

This section addresses the definitions of diaspora and the ways in which they have been applied to the Jamaican diaspora in the UK.

2.5.1 - Defining diaspora

Diaspora derives from the Greek word *diaspeirein*, meaning to 'scatter', and was a term originally used to describe the Jews and their multiple and traumatic displacements, 'the dispersion of the Jewish people beyond Israel' (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2021). The term was later applied to other people who had experienced 'dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland, to two or more foreign destinations' (Cohen, 2008 p2). See also (Safran, 1991, 2004; Cohen, 1997) These included Armenians, Palestinians and enslaved Africans. Brubaker (2005, p2) noted that by the late 1980s there had been 'a veritable explosion of interest in diaspora', and from the dearth of academic interest observed by Safran in 1991, by 2004 he was claiming that 'diaspora as a concept is being used so widely that it has become an academic growth industry' (Safran, 2004 p1).

Writing in the first edition of the journal *Diaspora* Safran noted that by the 1980s the term was being extended to describe 'expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court'* (Safran 1991 p83).

There was real concern by other academics (Tololyan, 1991; 1996, Cohen, 1997) that the term was losing its meaning. To halt this slide into meaninglessness Cohen identified, in 1997, a number of features that must be observable for groups to be considered diasporas. He revised these in 2008 with very few changes. While Cohen was prepared to accept that not all diasporic groups will demonstrate all the features as outlined to be deemed a diaspora, they are listed here in their entirety for two reasons. Firstly, because they are still referred to extensively in the literature and appear to be the benchmark by which other definitions are measured (Brubaker

2005) and secondly because the Jamaican diaspora in the UK display all of the features which include:

> 1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
>
> 2. alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
>
> 3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
>
> 4. an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
>
> 5. the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
>
> 6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
>
> 7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
>
> 8. a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
>
> 9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (Cohen, 2008 p17).

Safran (1991 p83) proposes a shorter, more concise list of characteristics which do not contradict Cohen's but extends certain elements of feature one and feature seven.

'They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original "centre" to two or more foreign regions'; and 'they believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate'.

The concept of 'homeland' is deeply rooted in Cohen's and Safran's criteria for groups being considered diasporas, probably influenced by the fact that some

dictionary definitions of diaspora, did not simply *illustrate* but *define* the word with reference to the Jewish case (Sheffer, 2003, p9).

The definitions of diaspora offered by Cohen and Safran have not halted the extensions to the term and its meaning. The term diaspora 'has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas in the service of which it has been enlisted' (Brubaker, 2005 p1).

Despite the proliferation of meanings, Brubaker identifies three core elements from Cohen's and Safrans' criteria that are still widely used, namely dispersion, homeland, and boundary-maintenance. The latter he defines as 'the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society (or societies) where the boundaries may be maintained by resistance to assimilation by self-isolation or as a consequence of social exclusion' (Brubaker, 2005 p6).

Boundary maintenance was a vital criterion of diaspora for early scholars (Armstrong, 1976; Safran, 1991; Tololyan, 1996; Cohen, 1997). According to Brubaker it is this that allows diaspora to be seen as a distinct 'community' in which there are distinctive social relationships and solidarity that 'cut across state boundaries and link members of a diaspora in different states into a single "transnational community"' (Brubaker 2005 p6). This notion of a defining distinctiveness and solidarity is challenged by Hall (1990, p235), who considers that the diaspora experience 'is defined, not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives through, not despite, difference: by "hybridity"'. He is here making the vital point that diaspora communities are not static, that they are constantly adjusting to their host countries.

There are other criticisms of diasporic communities being conceived as concrete and homogenous entities. Such criticism is levied at the lines drawn between the cultures of homeland and host countries, and between the diasporic communities and other communities (Brubaker, 2005; Ramnarine, 2007; Lidskog, 2017).

Other 'constructivist' concepts of diaspora view it as a dynamic process of lived experience, the result of a global diffusion of lifestyles, transnational migration, and changed views of citizenships (Ong, 1999; Shuval, 2000; Kokot, et al 2004; Brubaker, 2005).

Some have argued that diaspora should be viewed as an identity, but it is only one of many identities an individual may encompass. As Gilroy, in *Diaspora and the detours of identity* notes

> The sheer variety of ideas condensed into the concept of identity, and the wide range of issues to which it can be made to refer, fosters creative links between themes and perspectives that are not conventionally associated. Novel and fruitful connections can, for example, be established with psychological and psychoanalytic concerns on the grounds *that identity is the outcome of a combination of processes, both conscious and unconscious'* (My emphasis) (Gilroy, 2002 p304)

Diaspora is also not a fixed identity as 'processes of homogenisation and heterogenization can be found within as well as between cultures' (Lidskog, 2017 p26).

2.5.2 Types of diasporas

Bruneau (2010) identifies four types of diasporas. Those structured around an entrepreneurial pole, those structured around religion (often associated with a

particular language), those structured around a political pole, and those organised around a racial and cultural pole. The meaning given to the term diaspora, as with those given to heritage as discussed in 2.2, is dependent on the use to which it is being employed. While it was originally mainly used, and is still used, for safety and sometimes protection against the hostilities of the host nation, and as a way to maintain culture and religion, it is increasingly used strategically for political reasons (Safran, 1991; Brubaker, 2005; Franklin, 2010; Page and Mercer, 2012; Lidskog, 2017). Such political usage can be made either by the diaspora itself to encourage protective policies from the host nation, by the homeland to include distant nationals in home affairs, or by the host nation to emphasise their difference. All of these can be applied to the Jamaican diaspora in the UK.

Page and Mercer (2012 p8) chart the attempts by policy-makers to encourage diasporas to engage in homeland developments from their host countries, and argue that diasporas are better understood as ‘communities of practice’, particularly when their actions are seen as part of a wider social system based on the use of the diaspora’s knowledge, expertise and remittances to the homeland. They posit that a migration-development discourse presents a fundamentally positive relationship between international migration and international development. This discourse celebrates diasporas as ‘agents of change and progress’ and is fundamentally influenced by economics, that is, the extent to which diasporas are able to fund homeland developments. They also discuss the categorising of diaspora behaviour into ‘decision-makers’ and ‘option-setters’ (Page and Mercer, 2012 p3). This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter which addresses the Jamaican UK diaspora and its relationship with the Jamaican government.

While economic support in the form of remittances have been a huge driver in state-diaspora relations (Barry, 2006; De Haas and Pugh, 2006; Iskander, 2010), Delano (2010) and Gamlen (2014) suggest that this is only a part of the story. The wider story is one of influence on the international stage of their nationals which reflects well on the host nation and ultimately leads to increased investments either by the migrants or other international entrepreneurs.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature that informs and supports this study and discusses the theories and concepts that are most relevant for answering the research questions. In reviewing the literature, it identifies the aspects of Jamaican rituals that have not previously been researched and which this study addresses. It recognises that the recent flurry of interest in the ritual of nine-night is associated with the perception of its demise (Williams, 2015; Gordon, 2018; Richards, 2021). While there have also been concerns expressed anecdotally about the transformation of funerals and burials there has been no systematic enquiry into the full gamut of Jamaican death rituals which is the focus of this study. The chapter also discusses the challenges of using the socially constructed concepts of ritual, heritage, national identity, and diaspora in the academy due to their popular use in wider society, and seeks to ameliorate this with careful definitions of their specific use in this study.

The review of the literature also shows that while aspects of Jamaican culture have been formally recognised as ICH via the AHD process (UNESCO 2008, 2015, 2018), death rituals have not been so defined. The literature review also revealed that while there are pockets of references to Jamaican death rituals and their meanings

(Chevannes 1994; Lewis-Cooper, 2001; Senior 2003) there is not a body of research into which they are collated. This study also aims to rectify this.

The literature highlights that a protective mechanism employed by diasporas in hostile host nations is to focus on their culture as a means of preserving their identity and their heritage. This is often achieved by observing, as much as is possible, the rituals of religion and 'rites of passage' to create feelings of continuity with the homeland.

The contexts in which these rituals are practised and performed in Jamaica and in the Jamaican UK diaspora are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

'OUT OF MANY ONE PEOPLE'
JAMAICA, THE CONFOUNDING ISLAND

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the context for the research and is presented in eight sections including this introduction. Section 3.2 presents an overview of Jamaica's geographical location in the Caribbean and its historical experiences of slavery and colonisation which has resulted in the current national cultural demographic. Section 3.3 discusses the religions of Africa, Europe and the USA and their influences on Jamaican death rituals and those such as Revival and Rastafari that have their genesis in Jamaica. Section 3.4 explores the formation and experiences of the UK diaspora, including the soldiers who arrived in World War II and the arrival of nearly 500 Jamaicans on the SS Empire Windrush ship in 1948.

Section 3.5 discusses Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962, the challenges it faced in establishing itself as a nation-state, one of which was the ambivalence about its national identity as observed by Nettleford (1998), Thomas (2004), and Devonish (2010). This section also outlines the dialectic tensions that exist in Jamaica, particularly in relation to its national image as described by Johnson (2019). These are the tensions that led Patterson (2019) to describe Jamaica as *The Confounding Island*. In section 3.6 the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland is discussed, particularly the concept of the Jamaican 'family' and the government's efforts to operationalise the familial metaphor, while section 3.7 explores Jamaica's

relationship with safeguarding intangible cultural heritage via UNESCO's *Representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity*. The conclusions are presented in section 3.8.

3.2 Jamaica's location and historical overview

Jamaica is an island nation in the Caribbean Sea spanning an area of 10,990 square kilometres (4,240 sq. miles). It is the third largest of the group of islands known as the Greater Antilles with Cuba and Hispaniola, the island that contains the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, being larger. Jamaica lies 145 kilometres (90 miles) south of Cuba and 191 kilometres (119 miles) west of Hispaniola. The British Overseas Territory of Cayman Islands lies approximately 215 kilometres (134 miles) to the south-west.

Figure 3.1 Location of Jamaica Source: Ontheworldmap.com

The island is divided into fourteen parishes, each being a unit of local government. Kingston, the capitol, is combined with St Andrew hence there are thirteen local government authorities. The division of Jamaica into parishes dates back to British colonisation with most named after British cities or counties. For instance, the city of Manchester in the UK, in which part of this research was conducted, has given name to a parish in Jamaica.

Fig 3.2. Jamaica's parishes Source: My-island-Jamaica.com

That Black Africans were captured in their homeland, transported to Jamaica and enslaved, first by the Spanish (1513-1655) and later by the English (1655-1838) to work on sugar plantations as part of the infamous Transatlantic Slave Trade is well documented (Patterson, 1972, 1982; Chevannes, 1994; Mordecai and Mordecai, 2001; Senior, 2003). What is less generally well known is that not all Africans came to Jamaica in bondage. Between 1837 and 1867 following the enactment of the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 'some 11,000 arrived to work as wage labourers on the

plantations' (Senior, 2003 p270). These 'wage labourers' were employed on indentured contracts, working initially to repay their transport fares prior to being paid actual wages; a system that has been likened to a veiled form of slavery (Senior, 2003). This group was made up of Africans from Central Africa, as well as of Chinese and Indians. What is also less generally well known outside of the Jamaican context is that the Africans brought to Jamaica and enslaved were not from a homogenous group, coming as they did from different countries with different customs and practices around many cultural issues. The experience of enslavement created a melting pot from which new customs, influenced by the varying African, and later European practices, emerged (Chevannes, 1994; Patterson, 1997; Lewis-Cooper, 2001). Within the African descendants of the island exists three groups acknowledged as different by the wider society. These include the Maroons, the Bungo nation, and Rastafari. The Maroons are discussed below as their experience of slavery has particular recognition in Jamaica. The Bungo nation, also known as Kumina, came to the island as indentured labourers, and Rastafari developed a different way of life from the mainstream of Jamaican life in the 1930s. They are discussed in the section on religion as their contributions to Jamaican death rituals are viewed in religious terms.

3.2.1 The Maroons

During the period of enslavement in Jamaica (1533-1838) a distinct group of Africans emerged. They were termed *cimarrons* by the Spanish, meaning 'wild' or 'run-away' and later renamed Maroons by the British (Chevannes, 1994; Senior, 2003). The strong resistance movement they formed between 1655 and 1738 was located in the

west and the north of the island from where they fought guerrilla wars against the British. Unable to defeat them the British government signed separate treaties with each group guaranteeing their freedom from slavery to live in separate self-governing towns, with a proviso that unlawful killings be dealt with in national courts. This self-governing arrangement continues in the three remaining areas of Accompong, Moore and Maroon towns.

The communities have maintained many African cultural practices recognised by the national government as intangible cultural heritage worthy of safeguarding, and the Moore Town community was successfully presented for inscription on UNESCO's *Representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity* in 2008 (UNESCO, 2008). Accompong the largest of the Maroon towns, hosts an international event on the 6th of January each year to honour and celebrate their ancestors for their resistance and pragmatism. In 2015 The Blue and John Crow mountains were inscribed as World Heritage Site by UNESCO with particular reference to the Maroons,

> The forests offered the Maroons everything they needed for their survival. They developed strong spiritual connections with the mountains, still manifest through the intangible cultural legacy of, for example, religious rites, traditional medicine and dances (UNESCO, 2015 n/p).

A network of Maroon trails, hiding places and settlements forms the Nanny Town Heritage Route, an exception to the general focus on built heritage tours as discussed in 2.3.3. The resistance spirit of the Maroons is admired and respected and is sometimes claimed by or called upon by Jamaicans in challenging situations.

3.2.2 Post-slavery colonisation

Jamaica, after the abolition of slavery in 1838, remained a colony of the British Empire. It was not until 6th August 1962 that it gained its independence and became a nation state in its own right, but like many other British ex-colonial nations, it retained Queen Elizabeth 11 as head of state. This was a decision that proved divisive among Jamaicans and contributes partly to the ambivalence in Jamaican national identity. While some Jamaicans, mainly older individuals and those in the higher socioeconomic groups, still value Jamaica's membership of the British Commonwealth, others such as Rastafari and other Pan Africanists wished to sever ties with the post-slavery and post-colonial masters (Nettleford, 1998). Barbados a small lesser-known island in the Caribbean severed the ties with the British monarchy in 2021 by becoming a republic, as did Trinidad and Tobago, another Caribbean island, in 1976. In a 2022 visit by Royal Family members the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to Jamaica, the Jamaican prime minister indicated to them that Jamaica was poised to also sever such ties. The visit highlighted the ambivalence in Jamaica to this aspect of national identity, with some citizens clamouring to interact with the royals while others protested at their presence on the island, their unwillingness to apologise for being the beneficiaries of slavery, and their refusal to make reparations for the harm carried out to Jamaicans on their behalf.

The racial and ethnic make-up of the island has not changed significantly since its independence. According to the 2011 census the island is still populated by 90% of people of African descent, with a small percentage of the descendants of the European slave owners and other Europeans who have chosen to live on the island (Senior, 2003 p256). Other Europeans include a small community of Germans who reside mainly in Sleford Town in Westmoreland and are the descendants of

approximately two thousand Germans who came to Jamaica in the 1830s in the wake of the abolition of slavery as cheap labour to work on the plantations (Senior, 2003 p210). Indians and Chinese nationals also came at a similar time to the island as cheap indentured labourers. Towards the end of the 19th century, a significant number of Lebanese and Syrians, Christians fleeing religious persecution by the Ottoman Empire, sought refuge in Jamaica, which was still under British rule. They began as workers and later diversified into trading commercially. A former Jamaican prime minister, Edward Seaga, was of Lebanese descent. Table 3.1 below shows the demographic makeup of Jamaica in 2011 from the latest available census. The 10-year census which was to be conducted in 2021 was postponed until 2022 due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 3.1. Official census demographic. Source: The Statistical Institute of Jamaica 2011.

Ethnic group	% of total population
Black African	90.04
Indian	1.3
Chinese	0.2
White	0.2
Mixed (Black/other races)	7.3
Other races	0.1
Not stated	0.5
All races	100

Although the nation was made up of 90% Black Africans and effectively constituted what Smith (1991) calls an *ethnie* nation as discussed in Chapter 2, the government

chose the national motto ‘Out of Many One People’ to accommodate the other 10% of nationalities. By doing so it hoped to create and project a national identity of a united ‘melting pot’ nation free from racial tensions. While there has been little racial tension in Jamaica, socioeconomic and cultural tensions exist between the affluent Europeans and Eurocentric Black Jamaicans and the majority poorer Black Jamaicans. As Nettleford (1998) noted, the melting pot ideal is more an aspiration than a reality, and this divide is a continued source of dialectic cultural tension which impacts negatively on Jamaica’s international image (Johnson, 2019). It is the death rituals of the 90% of the population that identify as Black African in the table above that is the focus of this study, as it is within this group that concerns are being expressed. The following section addresses the role of religion in influencing the death rituals.

3.3 Religions in Jamaica and their influences on death rituals

As discussed in chapter two, death rituals are almost exclusively attenuated to religious and cosmological beliefs. Religion is therefore a strong personal and national identity signifier, and Christianity, being the main religion of the 90% Black Africans, forms part of Jamaica’s national identity. ‘Jamaica is undoubtedly a Christian nation. Some 60 per cent of the population are Christian’ (Lowe, 2021 n/p). This section focuses on the influences of Christianity and the other emerging religions in Jamaica on the death rituals. Religion plays a significant role in Jamaican life, and, although Christianity is dominant (Olsen, 1999), a wide variety of religions is also practised. Elizabeth Thomas-Hope (1980) noted that in the Caribbean Christian cathedrals and churches, Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, Jewish synagogues and

the meeting houses of the numerous Afro-Christian sects are imprinted on the landscape. It is commonly believed among Jamaicans that Jamaica has more churches per capita in the world than anyone else, 'With more churches per square mile — 2.4 churches, according to the Guinness Book of Records' (Lowe, 2021 n/p). The different denominations of Christian churches are influenced to varying degrees by African, European and North American religious practices each of which impacts on Jamaican death rituals.

3.3.1 African religions and their influences on death rituals

The religious beliefs and practices of many of the Africans who were forcibly brought as slaves to Jamaica were not recognised as religion by the Europeans due to their lack of understanding that 'African religions permeate all the different spheres of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it '(Mbiti, 1970 p1). They are not limited to worship on certain days of the week, nor are there written canons, which contributed to the misunderstandings. Further, as Senior notes,

> African beliefs and practices were misunderstood by Europeans, and were either rejected as 'superstition' or seen as dangerous. Consequently they were abandoned, transformed, or forced to go underground, e.g. OBEAH, MYAL. A strong African element nevertheless persisted, manifested today in such cultural expressions as KUMINA, REVIVAL and RASTAFARI, and in the way in which Christianity has been reinterpreted in African terms (Senior, 2003 p416).

These religions were deemed dangerous enough to be legislated against. Indeed, The Obeah Law passed in Jamaica in 1898 remains in force today, with few minor amendments, thus ensuring that obeah continues to be practised surreptitiously. It is still considered by some members of the population to be 'primitive', 'uncivilised' or 'irrational' and so remains stigmatised. An attempt by the Government in 2019 to

repeal the Act was met with support by members of the society who deemed its continued existence an anomaly in a country wishing to be viewed as modern and developed.

> For the Africans, Obeah and other spiritual practices were indispensable to their survival as a people, and were important elements in their struggle to preserve their identity in their rejection of European culture. That culture is no longer with us, but Obeah is still practised by elements in the society. In an informed, modernising democratic society we have to be careful about what we condemn, especially if it does not conform to our own belief systems. The legislation is worthy of being revisited and our legislators must weigh the cultural merits of retaining it over the fears that may still exist as to harm that it may present to individuals (Nembhard, 2019 n/p).

However, there was strong opposition from a number of Christian ministers and others who were concerned the legalisation of obeah would project the identity of the nation as evil and ungodly. These views were expressed extensively on websites and in WhatsApp videos. The pastor of Tower Hill Missionary Church, Rennard White, warned the Government:

> Be careful of the message you are sending. Any time people start to go into those things, they are going away from faith and confidence in Almighty God. It would bother me because you would be virtually endorsing the thing and virtually opening the gate to say to people it's okay (in Lundberg, 2019 n/p?).

The prophetess Almarie Campbell of Tarrant Baptist Church voiced her objection more forcefully and called on the church to join her in protest:

> It shall not be legalized. It shall not be legalized … Not on our watch, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Cause a fire to start in Parliament, cause a fire to start in Gordon House, [the meeting place of the Jamaica Parliament] cause a fire to start in the bed of every parliamentarian, cause a consuming fire to enter Parliament (in Lundberg, 2019 n/p?).

Such was the resistance to changes in the legislation that the government postponed the discussions. The Christian voice is still very influential in Jamaica, but has been

reinterpreted to take account of African practices, not just in Jamaica but also in the African countries who adopted European Christianity as part of the process of colonisation. Mbiti notes that ‘Even if they are converted to another religion like Christianity or Islam, they do not completely abandon their traditional religion immediately: it remains with them for several generations and sometimes centuries’ (Mbiti 1981 p3). A more recent phenomenon of what Berghuijs calls ‘multiple religions belongings’ (2017 p19) is also observed in Jamaica and in the diaspora. This entails individuals selecting aspects of practices and beliefs from different religions to form their own bespoke religion.

The main African beliefs embedded in death rituals in Jamaica are related to the continued power of departed ancestors to intervene in the lives of the living. Thus, attention to the correct performance of the death rituals is crucial to favourable intervention of the ancestors in the affairs of the family.

> Meticulous care is taken to fulfil funeral rites to avoid causing any offence to the departed (…). The funeral rites are intended to secure a peaceful departure for the deceased. They also ensure that the links with the living is severed so that normal life can continue among the survivors (Mbiti, 1981 p113).

Song, dance and drumming were also integral to most religious rituals including death rituals, as was feasting following the rites (Mbiti, 1981 p115). Mbiti stresses the importance of song and dance as part of death rituals: ‘By ritualizing death, people dance it away, drive it away, and renew their own life after it has taken away one of their members’ (Mbiti, 1981 p116). Singing and dancing is therefore seen as cathartic despite the death itself being sorrowful. Despite attempts to curtail the exuberance of the African influence of death rituals by the slave masters, even to the extent of outlawing nine-nights (Patterson, 2019), the practices survived, mainly due to the

slaves adopting some elements of Christian practices such as wearing black clothing and assuming a more sombre approach to the ritual of funerals, while maintaining their own practices. However, it is these European practices which are now deemed 'traditional' and in danger of being lost as heritage. The debate about death rituals can be interpreted as a microcosm of the wider debate in Jamaica regarding African and European heritage (Nettleford, 1998; Paton and Forde, 2012; Patterson, 2019).

Although some aspects of the African rituals perished under the institution of slavery and colonialism, others have been reinterpreted into new religions, which will be discussed after addressing the specific influences of European and North American Christianity.

3.3.2 European and North American religious influences on Jamaican death rituals

Christianity in the form of Roman Catholicism was the first Western religion brought to Jamaica by the Spanish settlers. After the capture of the island by the English the Church of England (now known as The Anglican Church) was established and superseded Catholicism, but with a need to attract settlers to the new colony other religions and denominations of Christianity were tolerated. These included Presbyterians, Quakers, Catholics, Moravians, Methodists and Baptists. Also tolerated was Judaism (Senior, 2003). Christianity and Judaism brought with them a belief in organised worship and deities removed from the day to day lives of the worshippers, and had no regard for the influence of ancestors. Death was final, with the deceased residing in an eternal heaven or eternal hell divorced from the lives of the family. The death rituals were therefore focused on mourning, with no opportunity

of communicating with the deceased until such time as the bereaved joined them in their respective eternal places. In fact, any attempts at such communication were strongly discouraged, as was evidenced by the burning as witches in the UK anyone who claimed to possess such abilities (Ehrenreich and English, 2010). Rituals were sombre, both in general worship and in death, and while the death rituals served similar purposes to the African ones, i.e. separation of the deceased from the living to enable the survivors to return to the business of living as outlined by van Gennep (1960), Turner (1967), and Mbiti (1981), they were not designed to placate the dead, were not followed by feasting and dancing, and were not generally loud affairs.

For some Jamaicans, particularly the ruling classes and those who aspired to climb the socioeconomic ladder, these European practices as mentioned earlier became the 'traditional' expressions of the rituals, and as such representative of Jamaica's heritage and national identity, while a predominantly poor Black sector of the nation held on to the loud African practices.

From the late 19th into the early 20th century newer denominations of Christianity such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Salvation Army, AME (African Methodist Episcopal Church), Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahai and Mormons were brought mainly from the USA. What most of them brought was not a belief in ancestor intervention in the lives of the living, but a form of worship that encourages exuberant singing, clapping, dancing in the aisles, and loud praises of the Divine. These religious expressions were more synergistic with the majority of Jamaicans preferences for worship and were embraced at a rate which led Senior (2003 p416) to observe that 'the fastest growing religious movement in Jamaica today is a 20th Century phenomenon – the many fundamentalist churches collectively grouped under Pentecostalism'. Pentecostal funerals and burials are often extensions of worship

services and can involve exuberant tributes of song, dance, and passionate sermons which often make appeals to the 'unsaved' to become 'saved' while there is still time. At the graveside there is often singing and clapping and the use of tambourines and drums while the body is being buried or entombed. It is within these churches that increasing expressions of African identity and African practices in the death rituals have been observed as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

3.3.3 Jamaican religions and their influence on death rituals

As discussed above, African elements of religion have persisted in Jamaica. They continue to find cultural expression in dances such as Kumina, which uses drums to induce spirit possession. The African practices were fused with Christian practices to create the new religions of Revival and Rastafari.

Kumina (also called Cumina) is considered by some Jamaicans to be a religion, but is more accurately described as a dance-music ritual, the primary purpose of which is communication between the ancestors of the Congo people and their descendants in Jamaica (Nettleford, 1985; Senior, 2003). Kumina is believed to have been brought to the island by the large numbers of indentured Africans who came to Jamaica in the 1840s to 1860s and the ritual practices have retained much of their integrity, having not been subjected to prohibition (Senior, 2003).

Although Kumina is not a religion it is viewed in religious terms because of its strong association with spirit possession. It is the dances to which Kumina refers and they are performed by people who originally and still sometimes refer to themselves as the Bungo people of the Congo (Senior, 2003 p271). However, in both Jamaica and

in the UK people I spoke to referred to themselves as Kuminas, so for some it is a dance, a people and a religion.

Kumina dances are performed during rites of passage or for healing purposes. The most elaborate are those performed as part of death rituals, and as with all Kumina dances they involve drums. The drums are vital to the ritual as the ways in which they are played determines the kinds of spirits summoned. The dancers wear bright flamboyant clothes, and once possessed by the spirits, their movements are interpreted as messages from them. While some dances are performed publicly, others are reserved exclusively for community members. Kumina dances were made popular under the influence of singers, dancers, and musicians such as Olive Lewin, founder of the Jamaican Folk Singers and Marjorie Whylie (musical director) of the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC) of Jamaica under the direction of Rex Nettleford, who used elements of the dances for national and international performances, thus facilitating an international acknowledgement of Kumina as a symbol of Jamaican national identity. I was fortunate to have seen the NDTC performances but arrangements to observe Kumina rituals in St Thomas, Jamaica, as part of this research were cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Kumina groups are found primarily in the parishes of St. Thomas and Portland, and to a lesser extent in St. Mary, St. Catherine and Kingston (Lewis-Cooper, 2001).
See Fig 3.2.

Revival has its origins in myal, an African expression of religion which was prominent during the period of slavery until it, and its sister practice obeah, were outlawed by the plantation owners for being subversive and dangerous to law and order. Both myal and obeah nevertheless maintained presence within Jamaica under the cover of Christianity. Belief in the power of the dead and possession by spirits is at the

centre of both myal and obeah, although the former is viewed as working on behalf of the community for good and the latter as working at the behest of individuals to cause harm or to gain favour. While obeah has remained outlawed, myal integrated Christian Baptist principles and was renamed Revival 'following the Great Revival of 1860-61 which started in Christian churches but was increasingly taken over by African elements' (Senior, 2003 P417).

Revival reintroduced African dress more prominently into their general worship as well as their rituals, particularly African style headwraps and fabrics as worn by their enslaved ancestors as shown in Fig 3.3. They are easily identified by their worship and rituals, which sometimes include street parades, colourful robes and turbans, powerful drumming and singing and for their wheeling dances to induce spirit possession. Their death rituals clearly acknowledge the belief that the deceased continue to play a part in the life of the living.

Fig 3.3 Revival street ritual. Source: LoopJamaica.com

Rastafari is reputed to have emerged from Revival. They share in common a lack of centralised leadership and structure. According to Chevannes (1994) Revivalism was based on a view that religion is embedded in everyday life consistent with African

religions, thus dispensing with the need for organised churches (Chevannes, 1994; Nettleford, 1998). Revivalism and Rastafari both have their roots in resistance, emerging from the poor and excluded in Jamaica and both are often ridiculed by the more orthodox religions. Chevennes also suggests that as a derivative of Revivalism 'Rastafari owed and continues to own much of its beliefs, practices and structures to its predecessor' (Chevannes, 1994 p120).

The birth of Rastafari is usually traced to the 1930s (Chevannes, 1994; Nettleford, 1998; Murrell et al, 1998; Senior, 2003) and was a response to 'social, economic and political forces in the region' (Murrel et al, 1998 p4). They were driven by the ideology of Marcus Garvey's African identity, Black religion and Black pride. Other commonalities between Revival and Rastafari include, as summarised by Senior, (2003) a conscious recognition of African heritage, and a philosophy based on the natural relationship between humans and their environment. They also share a consciousness of the physical body and the foods eaten to maintain the body's vitality ('*Ital'* foods are considered vital for optimum body functioning). They do not use refined sugar or salt and both religions recognise the taboo nature of pork.

A central tenet of Rastafari is the use of marijuana (ganja) as a 'sacred herb' to aid communication with Jah [God]. This brought adherents into conflict with the legal system for many decades as ganja was a proscribed drug. However, after many years of campaigning for its legalisation, and possibly because in the USA states such as California legalised marijuana, ganja was decriminalised in Jamaica in 2014, and Rastafari are no longer criminalised for practising that aspect of their religion.

The Rastafari religion, or as some still refer to it 'the movement', has gained worldwide recognition, with its messages of love and peace reaching international

audiences through the medium of reggae music by high profile names such as Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer. Rastafari as a new world religion has received considerable attention from researchers and film makers (Campbell, 1985; Chevannes, 1994; Hill, 1983; Murell et al, 1998; Owens, 1976; Pollard, 1994; Simpson, 1970; Smith et al, 1960), mainly because of its connection with popular music. As a result of this international exposure Rastafari has become symbolic of Jamaican national identity.

Despite the similarities of beliefs with Revival, Rastafari's beliefs around death were widely divergent. Where Revival believes in the ancestral status of the deceased and their intervention in family matters, Rastafari believed in instantaneous reincarnation negating the need for death rituals. The body was therefore disposed of either by non-Rastafari family members using Christian rituals, or buried quietly by the Rastafari community without ceremony. Rastafari also believed that corpses were polluting and as such should only be attended to by those who were themselves polluted. They used the Biblical phrase 'let the dead bury their dead' (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:60) as justification for not engaging in death rituals. However, as the religion grew, there was growing unease among members of the religion outside of Jamaica that true and 'clean' Rastas were being buried outside of their religion for want of appropriate rituals or celebrants to perform them. This forced a reassessment of the death tenet. As the Rastafari minister interviewed for this research said,

> Rasta use to have a thing, 'let the dead bury the dead' and them not going near a dead body, but I've been doing this work for 28 years now, and I was the only person doing it, and people in Jamaica used to hear of me and I used to say to them 'you guys need to step up to the mark man', you need to get somebody in Jamaica to do it' (Male aged 57 UK).

This view, according to the minister, has changed in Jamaica, and Rastafari ministers have been conducting funerals for approximately a decade. Rastafari uses the structure of the Christian public rituals, such as funerals and burials to which are added African content and symbols as discussed in Chapter 5. Rastafari rituals are easily identifiable by the use of the colours red, gold and green, and the white funeral dress of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Also evident is the prominence of the dreadlock hairstyle which is both symbolic of the religion and Jamaica's national identity. Rastafari is synonymous with Jamaica. As discussed in Chapter 6, attitudes towards Rastafari forms part of the dialectic tensions that exist in Jamaican heritage. While Rastafari is claimed by members of the adherents to be the religion of most rapid growth internationally, it is still a minority religion in Jamaica, but as will be discussed in Chapter 7, its influence permeates many aspects of Jamaican culture.

3.3.4 Religious distribution in Jamaica

Information on religion collected by Jamaican censuses between 1970 and 1991 focused exclusively on the Christian denominations, despite the 'other' religions being 23.9% of responses (Mordecai and Mordecai, 2001). The current figures for religious affiliations, obtained from the CIA and Encyclopaedia Britannica, show a significant increase in the North American Christian denominations at the expense of the European ones. This is probably due to the style of worship being more akin to that of African religions which includes loud singing, clapping and spirit possession. There is also a sharp increase in respondents identifying as having no religion (21.3%), Table 3.2 below summarises the main religious affiliations. Given the

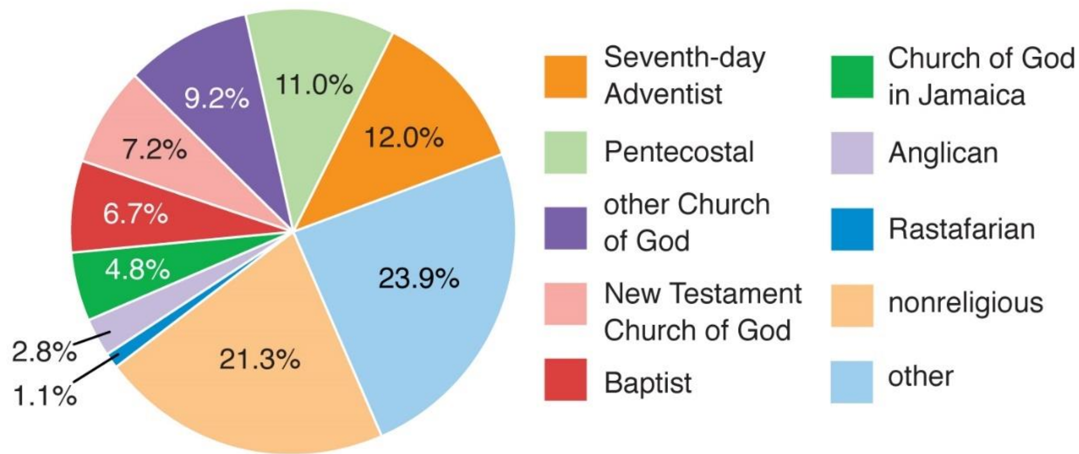
relationship between religion and death rituals, changes to religious affiliations and practices are likely to impact death practices.

Table 3.2. Percentage distribution of the population by religion. Source: Mordecai and Mordecai (2001 p41)

Religion	Census 1970	Census 1982	Census 1991
Baptist	17.8	10.0	8.8
Church of God	17.0	18.4	21.2
Anglican	15.4	7.1	5.5
Roman Catholic	7.9	5.0	4.1
Seventh-Day Adventist	6.5	6.9	9.1
Methodist	6.0	3.1	2.7
Presbyterian/Congregationalist	5.2	*	2.8
Moravian	2.9	1.4	1.2
Pentecostal	3.2	5.2	7.6
Brethren	1.8	1.1	1.1
Jehovah's Witness	-	-	1.7
Other	16.3	12.9	8.6
None	-	17.7	24.1
Not stated	-	11.2	1.5

The most recent figures for Jamaica's religious make-up are those contained in the 2011 census which are presented in Fig 3.3. The census originally due to be completed in 2021 has been postponed due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Fig 3.4 Jamaica's religious affiliation (2011) Source : Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc



© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

As stated earlier, this study is primarily concerned with death customs and practices on the island of Jamaica itself and within the Jamaican diaspora in the UK. Unfortunately, there is no corresponding data for religions in the UK Jamaican diaspora. However, it will be useful at this stage to discuss the Jamaican diaspora in the UK, its formation and its relationship with the homeland of Jamaica.

3.4 Formation of the UK diaspora

In chapter 2 I discuss the meaning of diaspora and demonstrate that according to Safran (2004) and Cohen (2008), Jamaicans in the UK satisfy fully all the criteria of diaspora. Of particular importance to the Jamaican diaspora, in light of the recent events of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in London and Bristol, and the racial

abuse directed at the Black English footballers following England's defeat against Italy in the Euro 2020 competition, is Safran's criteria of exclusion by the host nation:

> They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original "centre" to two or more foreign regions'; and 'they believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate' (Safran, 1991 p83).

It is estimated that approximately half of Jamaicans, nearly three million, and their descendants live outside of Jamaica, mainly in the USA, 1.8 million, the UK, 650,000 and Canada, 300,000 (The Jamaica Diaspora Movement 2021). While it would have been helpful to consider all the larger diasporas of Jamaicans, it is prohibitive in terms of time and costs in a study of this size. However, despite the UK diaspora not being the largest it has a longer relationship with the UK than the other diasporas with their host nations. As such a study of this kind can provide valuable insights in terms of longevity of residence, adaptive behaviours and the longitudinal impact on heritage. For many Jamaicans there is also an emotional connection with the UK, particularly those born prior to Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962 who still perceive Britain as the 'mother country' in a way that the US or Canada are not viewed. Many of these Jamaicans recall being British nationals with British passports and the fact that despite its independence, Queen Elizabeth II has remained head of the state of Jamaica reinforces their perception of their Britishness.

Many Jamaicans, being British citizens at the outbreak of World War 11, were eligible to fight in British forces to defend the 'mother country'. Although there were small communities of Jamaicans residing in Britain, the first large wave of migrants began to arrive during the Second World War. The stories of Jamaican service men and women are extensively chronicled by Murray (1996), Phillips and Phillips (1998) and Levy (2004). A larger number arrived just after the Second World War to help rebuild

a broken country, and a third wave came in search of employment, or to join family between 1960 and 1970. The largest single arrival was, as mentioned earlier, on the SS Empire Windrush in 1948 when 539 Jamaicans were part of the 802 Caribbeans who landed at Tilbury Docks in London (Phillips and Phillips, 1998; Rodgers and Ahmed, 2019). In 1962 Jamaica gained its independence from Britain and as a result automatic entry into the UK as British citizens and the right to remain indefinitely ceased with Jamaican citizens being subjected to UK immigration laws. For some Jamaicans this was the point at which migrating to the UK rather than the US or Canada ceased to be more advantageous.

It was this increased immigration that set the scene for Jamaicans to fulfil the seventh feature of Cohen's definition of diaspora, that is, 'a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group' (Cohen, 2008 p17). This lack of acceptance was an initial experience and has continued to be so for the UK's Jamaican diaspora. It was most publicly observed when Jamaicans and groups from other Caribbean islands arrived into the UK on the SS Empire Windrush ship in 1948. As colonies of Britain, the Second World War had also had a major impact on all the islands. While there had been no direct attack, there were shortages of fuel, some foodstuffs, equipment, and jobs. Accepting the invitation to help rebuild Britain, and by extension the Caribbean, those 539 men, women and children who stepped off the ship at Tilbury Docks were shocked by both the lack of preparation for their arrival, and the hostility they faced from the indigenous English. The reception of these Caribbeans, the majority of whom were Jamaicans, is well recorded in written, audio and visual forms (Levy, 2004; Phillips and Phillips, 1999; Olusoga, 2016;

BBC, 2018a). Jamaicans in the UK have lived with what Clifford (1997 p251) calls 'ongoing, structural prejudice'.

For some diasporas, such as the Jews, assimilation into host countries is a way to build new allegiances and develop new identities (Grubin, 2018). In the case of Jamaicans their skin colour made that impossible and it became clear at the outset that continued residence in the UK would require separate communities, not simply for identity purposes, but more importantly for safety and protection from the host nation. So great was the hostility that it was commonplace for house rental adverts to specify 'no blacks', 'no dogs', 'no Irish' (Phillips and Phillips, 1998 pp 89-92).

Many have queried why the Jamaicans did not simply return to Jamaica (BBC, 2018a; Gilroy, 1993; Phillips and Phillips, 1998) provide some answers. The Jamaicans had funded their travel to the UK, most had no financial means to return, some wanted to gain training and education, or to provide this for their children. Others wanted to be better educationally and vocationally equipped before returning home. Some of the men interviewed by Phillips and Phillips talk of a fighting spirit among Jamaicans that rises to meet a challenge. It was the same spirit they claimed that led the Maroons of Jamaica to a negotiated freedom from slavery a hundred years prior to the official abolition of slavery (Gottlieb, 2000; Phillips and Phillips, 1998). It is the same spirit, suggested some of these interviewees that has made Jamaica a world player in some areas, despite its diminutive size. This presence on the world stage is discussed in section 3:5 as it forms part of the dialectic tensions within Jamaica and between Jamaica and the diaspora.

Those who stayed therefore formed a society within a society, developing their own churches, the result of exclusion from UK ones; their own entertainment outlets; and

their own housing. The maintenance of their cultural practises, especially those relating to births, marriages and deaths, was part of the 'collective memory and myth about the homeland' in Cohen's criteria three (Cohen, 2008 p17) that held them together during those difficult times. Many dreamed of making enough money to return to Jamaica, some made plans that were never enacted, and as the years passed, the homeland became increasingly idealised (Horst, 2004).

When general rejection escalated to physical violence, not just against Caribbeans, but also against Asians and Africans living in inner cities, Jamaicans were at the forefront of the anti-racist movement of the 1970s and 80s. Jamaicans such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Benjamin Zephaniah and Bob Marley who would become well known later on, joined with the Asians and Africans to fight racism under the 'Black' banner (Gilroy, 2002). This further solidified Jamaican identity with resistance, first against slavery, then colonialism, and latterly against UK exclusion and violence. While this is viewed by some, including the Jamaican government, as an admirable quality, when such resistance is directed against government policy it increases the dialectic tensions between the government's projection of the nation's identity and the alternate identity created by the resistance as discussed in section 3.5.

It is my own observation that men meet in Jamaican barber shops and reminisce about 'the good old days' when the community was more cohesive, jobs were more abundant and young people had more respect. They bemoan the loss of West Indian dominance of world cricket but will proudly declare that they are British – except, of course, when it comes to cricket, dominoes and the Olympics, when they are proudly Jamaican. They, like many of the original wave of cohorts still hold an idealised view of Jamaica, despite access to news media about the current state of affairs, such as the increase in violent crimes (Gouldson, 2020), the migration from the rural

communities they idealise to the cities, the high levels of unemployment, lack of respect among young people, and 'virulent homophobia' (Johnson, 2019, p1). Many talk wistfully about returning, but the things now binding them to the UK are children and grandchildren. Family, ironically, was the very thing they wanted to get back to originally.

Some do return to Jamaica. Often a slow process of adjustment and reintegration is required (Horst 2004), but a number are not able to adjust to Jamaica's transformations during their absence and return to the UK. While there is initial disillusionment with the changed ideals of the homeland, some, after a time, begin the process of idealisation again (Horst 2004). Others have experienced violence resulting in loss of life, while still others lost property and returned to England feeling unsafe in the idealised homeland.

Cohen's sixth criteria requires that a diaspora demonstrates 'a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate' (Cohen, 2008 p17). The Jamaican diaspora can be shown to fulfil this criterion in the UK (Horan, 2012). Its sports men and women have represented England and Britain in a number of national and international disciplines including cricket, football, boxing, and athletics. It has influenced the music industry, developing new styles of music including a particular brand of British reggae known as 'lover's rock.' Members have entered parliament, the trades union, and the House of Lords. Yet, they are still acutely aware that they belong to two cultures and constantly straddle both, what W.E.B Du Bois calls 'double consciousness' (1899 p154) and so aptly applied to the British experience by Gilroy (1993 p112). The recent abuse of the Black England footballers mentioned earlier, one of whom is a

member of the Jamaican diaspora, is an excellent example of this double consciousness. While some Jamaicans have tried to assimilate, other such as Rastafari have emphasised the differences in their dress, language, and religious practices. It is not known whether this reduces their experience of double-consciousness, and is an area that would benefit from further research. While Jamaicans in the UK were pursuing British acceptance, Jamaicans in the homeland were pursuing independence.

3.5 Jamaican independence – birth of the nation-state

The Second World War gave Jamaicans, especially politicians and those returning from the war, a different understanding of Britain. It was not a country whose streets were paved with gold or whose rulers were masters of the world. The British Empire was in decline and the country was severely damaged in the war. Having helped Britain to secure victory, the Jamaican government, supported by the population, demanded autonomy and the right to self-government (Patterson, 1997; Chevannes 1994; Nettleford, 1998).

Independence was finally secured on 6th August 1962 and the nation state of Jamaica was born. It was, and still is, a fledging state. The majority of its people at independence had never known a time when they were not ruled by Britain, and many, descended as they were from slaves, had no memory of a time when someone else was not in charge.

Life was unfolding rapidly, changes were numerous, and in the hands of inexperienced politicians, not all strategies were successful. The alliances made with Russia and Cuba to pursue a socialist political ideology brought swift rebuke from the

United States, Jamaica's main trading nation. Sectors of the population in Jamaica welcomed the opportunity to assert more strongly and openly elements of their African culture which had been discouraged or actively suppressed. This group, led by academics such as Monroe (1972), Chevannes (1998), Devonish (2008, 2010, 2016), Paton and Forde, (2012), Paton (2019), and artists such as Louise Bennett and Rex Nettleford who straddled both, argued strongly that the nation's identity should reflect the customs, practices and artforms of the Black majority but found little support for this from the government who held steadfast to a melting pot ideology in which European culture, religion and artforms were valued above Jamaican Black cultural expressions. Nettleford (1998) considered this a major cause of the ambivalence and complexity of Jamaican national identity. Writing in 1970 in the first publication of *Mirror Mirror: Identity, race and protest in Jamaica* which was reprinted in 1998, he notes that 'in Jamaica the blacks are not regarded as the desirable symbol for national identity' (Nettleford, 1998 p36).

This was disappointing for the sector of the society who observed the influence Jamaicans such as Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) had within the American Civil Rights movement, advocating African identity for all displaced Africans and a return to Africa for all the African diasporas, particularly the descendants of those forcibly removed and enslaved. Garvey's Pan African movement had some success with diasporic Africans returning mainly to countries in West Africa and Ethiopia, but not in the numbers he had envisioned (Batty, 2016). An unsuccessful entrepreneur, his success and legacy are those of instilling self-worth and self-pride in Black people globally (Grant, 2009). His international contributions to Black identity were acknowledged with his recognition as the first national hero in the new independent nation. In the years following independence Jamaicans who had united in pursuit of

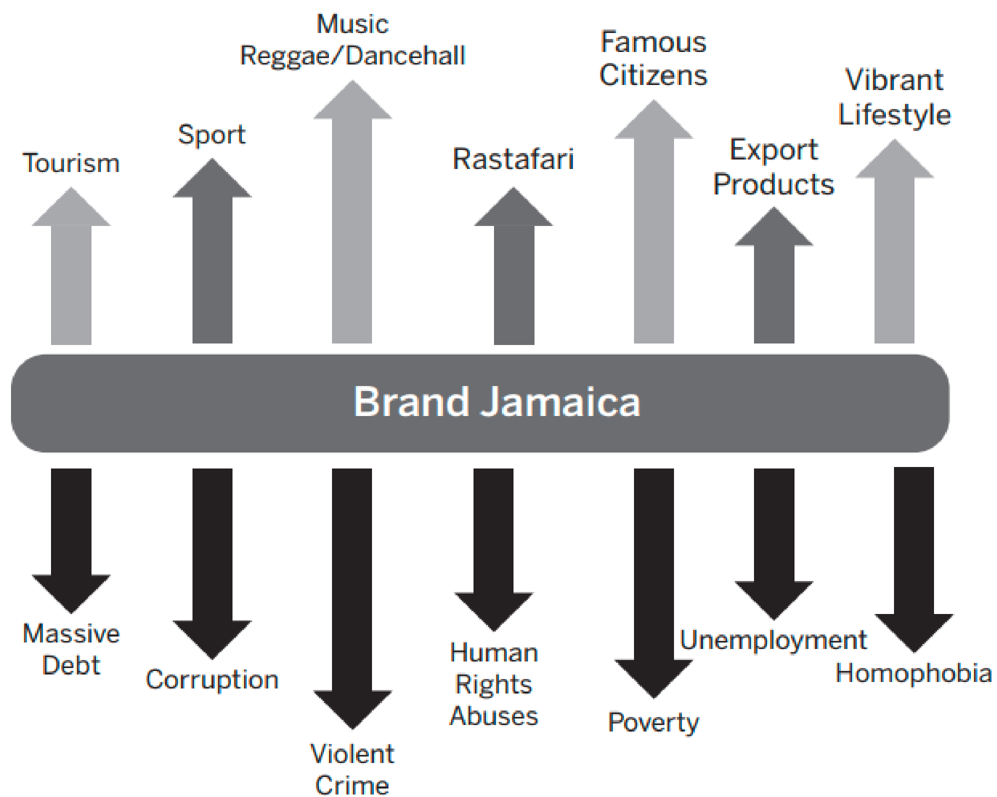
independence began to polarise, as the socioeconomic status had remained unchanged with the Black majority in the lower groups. Despite this Jamaica increased its profile on the international stage for highly visible positive achievements and equally visible negative reasons. In his observations of what has now become known as 'Brand Jamaica', Johnson (2019) describes the foundation of the current polarisation in Jamaica.

In writing about Jamaica as a 'brand' he notes that 'Jamaica is among the world's most recognized and highly identifiable nation brands' (Johnson, 2019 p1). He goes on to summarise the achievement and other assets that have made Jamaica famous. He also details the counter problems which are at the centre of Jamaica's ambivalence toward its heritage and identity.

> Jamaica has achieved fame and prestige from boasting a strong global image and symbolic portfolio as the home of one of the world's most iconic artistes, Robert Nesta Marley, (Bob Marley); some of the fastest sprinters in the world, including the legendary Usain Bolt, who is considered the planet's fastest human; a hugely popular indigenous culture featuring reggae, Rastafari, great food, and ganja (otherwise called marijuana or weed, which is said to be the best in the world); Jamaica is also internationally famous for having a year-round sunny climate, beautiful beaches, and landscapes described by many as a mythical, enchanting island, a "paradise" (Johnson, 2019 p1).

He highlights the opposing symbols of Jamaica's national identity, those of 'virulent crime, corruption, poverty, underdevelopment and homophobia' (Johnson 2019 p1) and positions Jamaica's brand 'between fame and infamy', presenting as it does a 'conflicting and ambiguous public international image' (Johnson, 2019 p2). One that is not only bad for governance, but also 'bad for business' (Johnson, 2019 p2). Given the extended family metaphor of Jamaicans in the diasporas, they are included in the dialectic tensions experienced in the nation.

Fig 3.5 Representation of the dialectic tensions that exists in Jamaica's national identity, Source: Johnson (2019) Page 8



3.6 Relationship between the diaspora and the homeland

The Jamaicans who left for Britain and other countries were not a homogenous group consisting as they did of artisans, musicians, labourers, construction workers, and professionals including nurses, doctors, teachers and lawyers (Franklyn, 2010). Majority of these maintain links with Jamaica, many making remittances to support family left behind. Even while applying for British citizenship some Jamaicans maintained their Jamaican nationality, opting for dual nationality. Historically this has been the actions of Jamaicans who emigrated to the UK, but increasingly British born Jamaicans are becoming Jamaican nationals, a trend that has escalated in the last decade and particularly in the wake of the Windrush scandal and the Black Lives

Matter protests (The Gleaner, 2022). This could be interpreted as an outcome of increased levels of insecurity and unacceptance by the UK and preparations for the possible future calamity suggested by Cohen.

> A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group (Cohen, 2008 p17).

With nearly half its people abroad contributing significantly to Jamaica via remittances which extend beyond individual families to the social fabric of the nation, Jamaican diasporas are involved not only in contributions made directly to families but to schools, procurement of hospital equipment and other charitable projects. Successive governments since 1962 sought to 'encourage a systematic and coordinated approach to the relationship between Jamaica and its oversees communities' (Franklyn, 2010 p xii), but it wasn't until the late 1990s that this began to become a reality, when the concept of the extended family was being heavily emphasised.

In his book *The Jamaican Diaspora: building an operational framework* Delano Franklyn outlines the government's efforts to create 'a seamless Jamaican transnational society across the miles' (Franklyn, 2010, p xiii) by enlisting the help of commercial organisations, academic institutions, newspapers and churches, an explicit intent to encourage Jamaicans to maintain their citizenship as well as national identity. Following a series of consultative meetings, the Government organised the first diaspora conference in 2004 which was considered extremely successful with delegates from the USA, Canada and the UK, and has continued as a biennial event in Jamaica with the three major diasporas facilitating local conferences in the intervening years.

The government's intention is to make the metaphor of the extended family a reality by encouraging diasporic Jamaicans to participate in all economic, political, social and cultural aspects of the homeland. Other countries with large diasporic communities have sought to encourage more involvement similarly to Jamaica. Page and Mercer (2012) outline possible government strategies for achieving this. They expand the definition of remittance beyond merely funds to include telephone conversations in which ideas, information and values are shared, as well as journeys that share skills and knowledge with the homeland (Page and Mercer, 2012 p4). They posit that governments engage with diasporas as 'decision-makers' or 'option-setters'.

> When diasporas are 'decision-makers' they behave like shoppers choosing products selected by a retailer. When diasporas are 'option-setters' they behave like the focus groups that influence what products are put on the shelves (Page and Mercer, 2012 p7).

As 'decision-makers' remitting to the homeland, diasporas make choices from a range of projects or services to support; while as 'option-setters' they seek to influence policies made by governments, businesses and international institutions. The Jamaican government has expressed a desire to include diasporans as option-setters with strong national identity to the homeland. At the second diasporic conference in Jamaica in 2006 the then Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller explained the government's plans for working with the diasporas:

> We see it as our role, as Government, to create the mechanisms for participation and involvement, to foster the institutional framework through which you can impact development here and facilitate your fullest democratic and active participation in shaping the future of this country, where your hearts are (Portia Simpson Miller (2006) in Franklyn, 2010 page 47).

This inclusivity as one nation has not been investigated in relation to cultural practices or national identity. Research has tended to look at each location separately. This study addresses the homeland and diaspora as one family with regard to the issues of heritage and national identity.

3.7 Jamaica’s relationship with heritage

In the decades following independence, sugar, bananas, and bauxite were Jamaica’s main exports. As these markets diminished, between 1970 and 2006, Jamaicans, like many of the other Caribbean islands, directed their attention to tourism as their main source of income. Jamaica’s profile on the world stage was and continues to be effective in attracting visitors. While many of the visitors are lured by its turquoise seas, white beaches and year-long sunshine, increasingly Jamaica also promotes itself as a heritage tourist destination. As Shepherd (2010 p44) notes

> Jamaica has a rich and textured history that is often buried beneath its sand and sea and hidden behind its sunshine glow. A growing interest in heritage tourism, however, requires that we showcase this important past, so crucial to our sense of identity and nationhood.

Here heritage is being promoted in terms of Jamaica’s ‘tangible’ past. While it is important to acknowledge the nation’s physical heritage, it is the intangible heritage for which it is best known. This is perceived by some Jamaicans as the government’s persistent focus on Jamaica’s European past at the expense of Jamaica’s African and recent Jamaican heritage. The Government’s continued adherence to authorised heritage discourse, and the population’s resistance to it is an ongoing tension which is discussed more fully in Chapters 6 and 7.

Visitors to Jamaica are able to follow an island-wide heritage trail which includes physical and natural heritage, and to a lesser extent, intangible heritage (Buckley, 2010 p50). Successive Jamaican governments, as a result of sustained pressure from various groups and individuals, have gradually incorporated aspects of Jamaican natural and cultural heritage into the authorised heritage discourse. As discussed earlier The Moore Town Maroons' way of life was inscribed on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* in 2008, followed by Reggae in 2018. A further submission in 2019 of the Revival religion and customs was unsuccessful. The Blue Mountains and John Crow Mountains were inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2015 as discussed earlier which demonstrates the strong influence of 'heritage from below' (Robertson, 2008 p143) in forcing official recognition of the majority culture in Jamaica.

Despite the attention being paid to particular aspects of ICH and the global expansion of Jamaica's intangible culture, there are concerns in both Jamaica and the UK diaspora that Jamaicans are losing aspects of their intangible cultural heritage, particularly its death rituals. In his articles *The death of nine-nights – part 1* and *Death of the ninth-nights – part 2 from* which this study takes its title, Williams (2015), in his interview with one of Jamaica's senior historians Dr Clinton Hutton outlines the concerns which fall into five main categories.

Firstly, the types of food eaten:

> Gone are the days of chocolate tea, cocoa tea, hard-dough bread, fried sprat, 'mannish' water, etc, and traditional music bands. More often than not, a sound system comes to play contemporary music, which attracts sundry vendors and other non-traditional elements.

Secondly, the forms of song and music:

> But over the years set-ups and 'nine-nights' have evolved into mainly dancehall parties and commercial opportunities. For me, I don't like to go to wakes and they play sound systems.

Thirdly, lack of community involvement:

> Yet, there are still 'duppy bands' that are preserving some of the traditional wake rituals. Invariably, these bands and sound systems are brought into the community and the community members who used to participate in these rituals are now divorced from these rituals, side lined.

Fourthly, the loss of meaning of the ritual:

> There is a real big meaning of the relationship between the living and the dead. There are people who still believe that relationship exists, and that our daily lives are not just about the living. That's why people feed the dead. That's why they speak about the dead in the present tense. They are not gone. We are losing that because we are not being faithful to the tradition in the context that changes happen. But when we don't do that the very important reasons for the ancestors being a part of our continued existence, we are losing that. And ... what we are doing is losing ancestral memory, and ancestral memory is absolutely valuable to our existence.

Fifthly, pressure on families to provide food and drink:

> What is even more perturbing for some people is that nowadays total strangers turn up empty-handed asking for food and liquor. This is a reversal of the traditional roles in which mourners walked with 'something' to give to the bereaved, and when neighbours, friends and associates built caskets and made graves free of cost (Williams, 2015 pp1-4).

There were echoes of these concerns in the UK with regards to the nine-night. For example, Natasha Gordon's play *Nine-Night* was performed to full houses at the National Theatre for four weeks prior to being transferred to the West End, also to sell-out performances (Gordon, 2018). In an interview with Giulia Rhodes (2018) of

the Guardian newspaper in the UK Gordon explained that her main reason for writing the play was the feeling of losing touch with her heritage:

> We were supposed to understand it all, but how? For my grandparents and my mum, far from home, these traditions just made sense: they were comforting. But my generation lost touch with the rituals. Nobody had time to explain. They were busy just surviving, and we wanted to be the same as everyone else anyway. It can take a long time to appreciate your heritage (Rhodes, 2018 n/p).

In addition to the concerns about the nine-night there were also concerns about the funeral ritual, particularly concerning dress, length of the service and cost of the ritual. This research aimed to assess the extent to which these concerns were generalised within Jamaica and in the UK diaspora or whether they were limited to professionals, academics and the media.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a context for the research by exploring the main influences on Jamaican death rituals, including its history of slavery and displaced peoples, and the effect this has had on the proliferation of religions that are central to death rituals. It discusses the formation and experiences of the Jamaican diaspora in the UK, and the creation of a nation-state after independence from Britain. It also contextualises the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland as a means of understanding the changes to the death rituals as they are perceived in both places. Finally, it looks at Jamaica's relationship with heritage, to more clearly establish the motives for this research.

While there are clear concerns from certain sectors of the community in both the diaspora and the homeland, the research aims to ascertain whether those concerns are shared by the wider community, and to what extent the dialectic tensions that exist in national identity is reflected in the transformation of the death rituals.

The following chapter addresses the strategies and methods used to investigate the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH STRATEGIES AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the philosophies that underpin this research, the design employed for the field study and the data collection methods used. It is comprised of four sections.

Section 4.1 uses an analogy of building construction to outline the research design and restates the research objectives and questions. Section 4.2 outlines the research philosophy, strategies and data collection methods that were employed to meet the objectives of the research and to answer the research questions. The ethical considerations of the study, particularly the challenges of researching sensitive issues and the use of ethnography and participant observation are discussed in this section. Section 4.3 describes the process of data collection including recruiting participants, piloting the questionnaire and interview, carrying out the interviews, and observing the events. This section also discusses the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions on the research. Section 4.4 concludes the chapter with a discussion of the effectiveness and the limitations of the methods used.

I found Bryman's (2016) suggestion that designing a research study is analogous to designing and constructing buildings a useful starting point from which to consider the most appropriate philosophy, strategy, design and data collection methods for the study. The comparisons between the two are shown in Fig 4.1.

Fig 4.1 Building construction and research comparison

Building construction	**Research**
Type of building Commercial v Domestic	**Paradigm/philosophy/epistemology** Positivism v Interpretivism (also called constructivism)
Building materials Brick v Wood v Concrete (or a mixture)	**Strategies/ Approaches** Quantitative v Qualitative (or a mixture)
Interior design Type of rooms - Kitchen - Dining room - Bedrooms - Bathrooms - Toilets - Offices	**Research design** - Case studies - Phenomenology - Ethnography - Comparative - Survey
Building tools - Hammer - Screwdrivers - Concrete mixer - Saw	**Data collection methods** - Questionnaire - Interview - Observation - Documentation

A competent builder applies a systematic approach to each building project in much the same way a researcher designs a project. A builder does not decide on the tools until the nature of the building is decided. A crane may be needed for a hotel complex but may not be necessary for a two-bedroomed domestic house. Similarly, a concrete mixer would not be required for a building made of wood, nor would putty be necessary if the windows were shuttered and not glazed. The builder makes decisions based not only on the purpose of the building but also on cost and other practical considerations such as the location, and so must a researcher make decisions on these issues. Choices made about philosophy, design and data collection methods are based on the objective and research questions as shown below.

Research aims and objectives

The aim of the study as stated in Chapter 1.1

Research objective – To investigate whether changes to Jamaican death rituals constitute a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the UK diaspora, and to determine the causes and consequences of the changes.

The research therefore posed the questions:

Question 1 – What is the nature and extent of the changes to Jamaican death rituals?

Question 2 – What is causing the changes to the death rituals?

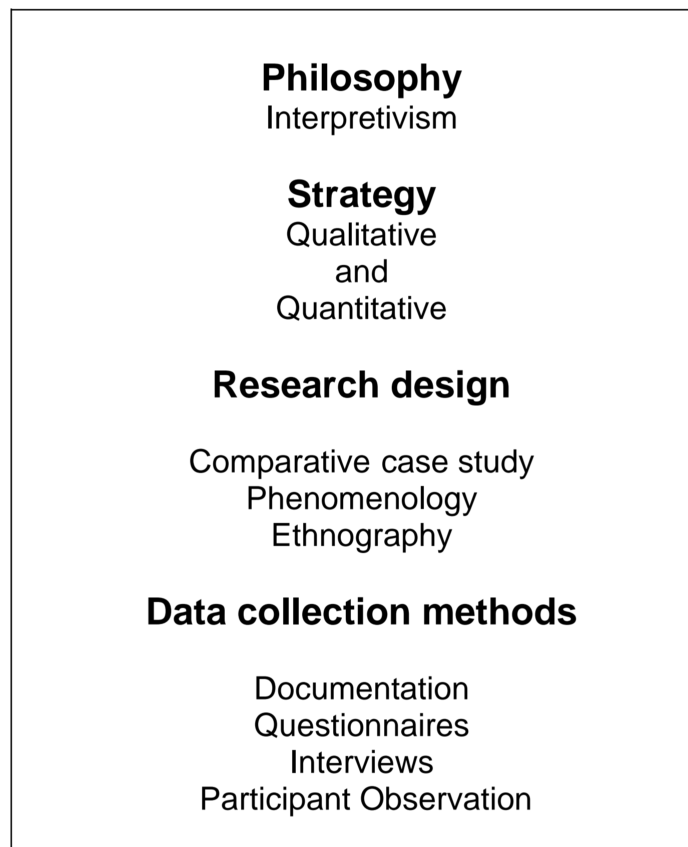
Question 3 – What are the consequences of the changes to the death rituals?

The remainder of this chapter discusses what was considered most appropriate for answering these questions. It is comprised of five sections.

4.2 Designing the research

The table below (Fig 4.2) outlines the research philosophy, strategy, design and data collection methods. The research applied interpretivism philosophy with a qualitative strategy. Comparative case study, phenomenology, and ethnography formed the design, and data gathering methods included documentation, questionnaire, interview and participant observation, each of which, and the reasons for their use, is discussed below.

Fig 4.2 Outline of research design



Like the builder I had to decide the nature of the research and the underpinning philosophy, the foundations. Social Sciences research employs two main philosophies, sometimes called paradigms or epistemology, namely positivism and interpretivism, and the nature of the research dictates which is used.

Positivism holds that all authentic knowledge should be verifiable through scientific methods such as observations and experiments, akin to those used in the natural sciences. 'The position that affirms the importance of imitating the natural sciences is invariably associated with an epistemological position known as positivism' (Bryman, 2016 p24). According to this philosophy, research should be used to explain, predict and discover, and should be replicable through empirical means. Positivist research uses quantitative methods such as direct observation, structured questionnaires and

social surveys to test hypotheses and generate social theories. The role of research is therefore to 'test theories and provide material for the development of laws' (Bryman, 2016 p24). Positivism is concerned with how humans respond to their environment and posits that knowledge of human behaviour should be value-free (Watson, 1930; Skinner, 1979; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Interpretivism on the other hand holds that individuals are complex and may react to external forces in different ways, which explains differing behaviours of individuals placed in the same situation. Interpretivism therefore rejects the position that scientific methods are appropriate to analyse human behaviour, and employs qualitative methods such as unstructured interviews and participant observation as tools for investigating human behaviour (Bandura, 1986; Foster, 1995; Pulla and Carter, 2018).

There are, in addition, ontological differences between the two stances. Positivism purports that human behaviour is a response to social situations and can be objectivised and generalised, whereas interpretivists hold that knowledge of the human world is constructed socially. They are thus sometimes referred to as constructivists and do not believe that knowledge is value-free as it is transmitted through discourses, ideas and experiences which are all value-laden. Table 4.3 below provides a summary of the main differences between the two theoretical poles.

Fig 4.3 Differences between positivism and interpretivism

	POSITIVISM	INTERPRETIVISM
Definition	A sociological research approach that states that human behaviour and society should be studied using natural scientific methods	A sociological approach that states that it is important to understand or interpret the beliefs, motives and actions of individuals in order to understand social reality
Behaviour	Human behaviour is based on social norms as society shapes individuals	Individuals are complex and each have different experiences and view the same reality in different ways
Aim	To discover the law that governs human behaviour	To gain insight into individuals and understand why people behave in certain ways
Methods	Quantitative methods such as statistics, surveys and questionnaires	Qualitative methods such as participant observation and unstructured interviews

Adapted from www.differencebetween.com Accessed 02/09/21

Many social researchers employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods accepting that some aspects of human behaviour are quantifiable while other are not (Plano-Clarke, 2010; Creswell and Plano-Clarke, 2011). So widespread is its use it has attracted guidance from the UK Government (Gov.UK, 2020). As indicated in Fig 4.2 this research applies a mainly interpretative approach as it is more concerned with the meanings ascribed to the phenomena of death rituals and the changes to them than with quantifiable aspects of behaviour. It does, however, use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather the data. Qualitative methods such as interviews and oral history were used to discover previously unrecorded rituals, to determine individual's responses to the changing rituals and to ascertain the degree to which these responses could be interpreted as crisis. Quantitative data such as those structured by the schedules used to record the activities at the public

events were used to determine which of the rituals were widely practised and therefore defined as extant, which were less well practised and therefore under threat of extinction, and those no longer practiced and therefore extinct. The design selections of comparative case study, phenomenology and ethnography are discussed in 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3.

4.2.1 Comparative case study design

The use of case study in qualitative research is widespread due to its versatility in a range of contexts. Bryman (2016 p62) lists five ways in which case studies are used. The *critical* case is designed to test a theory and to gain better understanding of the circumstances in which the theory will not hold. The *extreme* or *unique* case is used extensively by anthropologists to examine societies that they believe are unique or extreme such as Mead's (1928) study of adolescence in Samoa as a unique case, and Fielding's (1981) observation of the extreme right-wing UK organisation the National Front. The *representative* or *typical* case whose objective is 'to capture the circumstances and conditions of everyday or commonplace situations' (Yin 2014 p48) is also called *exemplifying* cases as they are seen as good examples of the issue being studied. The *revelatory* case is used when 'an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation' (Yin, 2014 p49) and the *longitudinal* case is usually chosen when the issues being researched requires long-term investigation.

It is of course possible to combine more than one type of case study such as an exemplary case that requires longitudinal investigation. This study uses the revelatory case to investigate the phenomenon of Jamaican death rituals in a

systematic way. The rituals have not strictly been inaccessible as Yin's definition suggests, but rather they have not been subjected to scientific scrutiny as, say, the death rituals of the USA (Mitford, 1963; 1998) or the UK (Naylor, 1989).

One of the standard criticisms of case study, as noted by Bryman (2016 p 64), is that findings thus derived cannot be generalised. He notes that advocates of case study counter this by asserting that generalisations are not the sole purpose of the case study. They are more frequently used for comparative purposes, as is the case in this study.

Comparative design entails studying two contrasting cases using more or less identical methods. Bryman notes that this strategy embodies the logic of comparison in that 'we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases of situations', and is often used in cross-cultural or cross-national research (Bryman, 2016 p65). The comparative design, when applied to qualitative research strategy, takes the form of multiple-case study (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001). Case study is a fitting strategy for this research given that concerns were being expressed in two locations. The value of being able to forge a comparison through a multiple-case approach is that it allows the distinctive as well as the common features of cases to be drawn out (Bryman, 2016 p67).

Further criticisms of the case study approach point to issues of reliability, replicability and validity, but its adaptability for small scale study made it a useful part of the research design, particularly when combined with a range of methods in collecting the data.

4.2.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology as a research strategy sits within the interpretivist philosophy. It has its origins in the work of Husserl (1979; 1998) and Heidegger (1962) and emerged out of the field of psychology as an alternative to systematic observation which was unable to comment on the *meaning* of behaviours being observed (Englander, 2012). Phenomenology therefore 'seeks to make explicit structure and meaning of human experiences. It is the search for 'essence' that cannot be revealed by ordinary observation' (Sanders, 1982 p354).

Husserlian phenomenology uses the method of interviews to draw out from individuals the effect of an experience (a phenomenon) on them. Heideggerian phenomenology on the other hand uses the interview to investigate beliefs and perceptions as well as the meaning of a phenomena for the individual. Phenomenology is a theory in which is embodied the method of data collection, i.e. recorded in-depth interviews from which the data is extracted.

Giorgi (1997) notes that phenomenological research, like all qualitative research, needs to go through five basic steps.

> 1) collecting of verbal data, 2) reading of the data, 3) breaking of the data into some kind of parts, 4) organization and expression of the data from a disciplinary perspective, and 5) synthesis and summary of the data for purposes of communication to the scholarly community (Giorgi, 1997 p11).

Giorgi (1997) also notes the blurring of the edges of Husserlian and Heideggerian approach within a single study, thus allowing both the effect and the meaning of the phenomenon to be commented on in one study.

This study uses phenomenological interviews to interrogate the complex phenomena of death rituals, how they are experienced by Jamaicans in both the UK and Jamaica and what meaning the rituals have for them. It employs Denscombe's definition of phenomenology as 'something that stands in need of explanation; something of which we are aware but something that, as yet, remains known to us only in terms of how it appears to us directly through our senses' (Denscombe, 2017 p138).

Phenomenology is particularly effective when used in conjunction with both oral history and the final research strategy, ethnography.

4.2.3 Ethnography

Ethnography, while also concerned with description of phenomena, goes beyond description to interpretation of peoples or cultures. It was made popular as a social research strategy by Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) and Margaret Mead (1928), anthropologists who immersed themselves in the lives of the people they studied in order to understand and explain the way all aspects of the culture worked. Their use of ethnography was based on an old-fashioned view of 'cultures' as neatly bounded units that could be studied in a comprehensive way by an outsider. Ethnography has evolved through the work of Geertz (1973) and Turner (1967) and has in common with phenomenology the focus on how the people being studied understand their world. Although ethnography generally requires the researcher to spend considerable time 'in the field', the length of time can be truncated when the technique is used by researchers who are already familiar with the intricacies of certain aspects of the culture but need to gain a greater understanding of another aspect of it. Vassel (2002), Horts (2004), Thomas (2004) and Patterson-Igwe (2019) are Jamaicans who

have used ethnography to study aspects of their own culture, building on Du Bois's (1899) seminal ethnographic work *The Philadelphia Negro*. There are, however, significant ethical issues to be considered when employing ethnography, but despite this the ability to make direct observations of the rituals outweighed the disadvantages in choosing this as part of the research design. As a Jamaican born in Jamaica and living in the UK, I already possess some understanding of the culture in both locations. The ethnographic aspect entailed being a participant observer at various death-related events, and engaging in discussions with members of the public about death rituals in the UK and Jamaica.

4.2.4 Ethical considerations of the methodology

Denscombe cites the ethical considerations of ethnography as one of the main disadvantages of the strategy because

> The close involvement of ethnographic research with the peoples and cultures being studied, combined with the depth and detail of the information collected, means that special attention needs to be paid to the ethical problems associated with intrusions upon privacy, disclosure of identities, and with gaining informed consent from research subjects (Denscombe, 2017 p92).

The ethics of researching sensitive issues had also to be considered, where sensitive is defined as

> Studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research. For example, a study that examines the relative merits of day care for infants against full-time care by the mother can have broad implications and thus can be considered socially sensitive (Sieber and Stanley, 1988, p49).

Other more recent examples of sensitive issues include research into the emotional and social effects of cancer, HIV/AIDS, and the issue of asylum seekers.

Sieber (1993) suggests that a prerequisite for ethical problem solving is an accurate assessment of the potential for risks and sensitivities and that this assessment is carried out for all phases of the research process. The particular issues to be assessed include

> privacy and confidentiality, safety of individuals, validity of the research, respectful communication, equitable treatment of the parties involved, responsible stewardship of the data and of the knowledge that is gained, and responsible relationships with relevant gatekeepers and opinion leaders (Sieber, 1993 p19).

The university's ethical process required that such issues were adequately addressed prior to approval for commencement of the research. The specific ethical concern relating to death was that of unresolved grieving for participants during or post interview. My training in grief counselling provided the necessary assurance that participants who experienced such triggers would receive immediate intervention from myself or be signposted to organisations able to provide longer term assistance if required. No one who had experienced a bereavement within twelve months would be targeted to participate in the interviews to minimise the potential for unresolved grieving. With regard to researching sensitive issues generally, I have previously conducted research on sensitive topics such as child sexual abuse and I am familiar with the protocols required for anonymity, confidentiality, and duty of care. I am also skilled in establishing rapport easily with individuals in ways that are conducive to eliciting information in a relaxed manner.

With regard to the ethics of attending the events, there were no ethical imperatives to declare my researcher status as these events are open to all members of the

Jamaican community, and to anyone who knew the deceased or wishes to support the family. Indeed, in terms of ethnographic observations it was an advantage that my researcher status was not known. It mitigated against reflexivity, that is, of people behaving differently because they know they are being observed.

As will be shown in the sections dealing with data gathering, there were times when my anonymity as a researcher was a distinct advantage. There were times, however, when it was necessary to make my researcher status known in order to seek verbal consent to include as data the content of conversations with attendees at the events. This was granted in all cases with the agreement that their names would not be used. The converse desire for being named was an issue to be addressed with some of the interviewees. On being advised that their names would be anonymised some specifically requested that they be named in the final document as they wished to be associated with the project. After the second occurrence the question of naming was clarified with following interviewees and retrospectively with previous ones. Those who desired their names to be used are listed in Appendix A.

The fieldwork was planned to be carried out between 1st October 2019 and 30 October 2020, with the first four months, 1st October 2019 to 31st January 2020 taking place in the UK, the second four months 1st February 2020 to 31st May 2020 taking place in Jamaica and the final four months to be spent back in the UK reviewing the data and, where necessary, carrying out further data collection. In the UK the three cities with the largest populations of Jamaicans, i.e. London, Birmingham and Manchester, were chosen as the locations for the fieldwork and in-depth interviews. The work carried out in the UK was replicated in Jamaica with minor adjustments to take account of contextual differences. For example, in Jamaica the Maroons and the Kumina groups, who are not represented in sufficient numbers

in the UK, were included to test the possibility that their death rituals had retained more elements of African practices from which it may have been possible to gain understanding of the meaning of the rituals. In order to gain meaningful answers, it was necessary to address these questions in both the UK and in Jamaica using a range of different methods.

4.3 Collecting the data

As a builder chooses different tools for different aspects of the construction, so the most effective methods are needed for collecting the research data. These were documentation, questionnaire, interviews and participant observation. The advantages and disadvantages of each are presented in Table 4.4. The steps taken to mitigate the disadvantages are discussed in detail in section 4.3.2 which deals with the fieldwork.

4.3.1 Recruiting participants

Although I had been identifying potential interviewees in my general discussions, I needed to apply a more systematic approach to recruiting participants. I used sampling which involves ‘a strategic… focus on some, rather than all, of a research population’ (Denscombe, 2017 p33). The basic premise of sampling is that it is possible to produce accurate findings without the need to interview every member of a research population. Representative and exploratory samples are the two types of sampling associated with social research. The former is used in larger surveys and quantitative data is collected; the latter is used more often in small scale research where qualitative data is being collected. As Denscombe notes ‘an exploratory

sample is used as a way of probing relatively unexplored topics' (Denscombe, 2017, p34) and was therefore appropriate for this study for gathering data on different types of rituals.

In selecting the participants, the choices were between probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling relies on random selection from the research population and, like representative sampling is suited to large scale quantitative data. Non-probability sampling, also known as purposive sampling, works best

> Where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones with a particular purpose in mind because they are likely to produce the most valuable data. They are selected with a specific purpose in mind, and that purpose reflects the particular qualities of the people or events chosen and their relevance to the topic of the investigation (Denscombe, 2017 p42).

Non-probability sampling was the most appropriate tool based on the size of the study and my knowledge and experience of the community. The target participants are detailed in Table 4.1 with discussions for their selection.

*Sampling in the UK and Jamaica***.** Table 4.1 shows the different groups that the research aimed to interview, which is followed by a description of why they were targeted. Some interviewees were targeted for their professional involvement in death rituals. These included religious ministers, funeral directors, caterers, florists, care home staff and managers of venues used for nine-nights, receptions and repasses. The premise was that such people would be able to comment on changes observed in the requests for their services, indicating changes in practice of the rituals.

Table 4.1 Proposed sample for interviews including the questionnaire

Those involved professionally	Number	Location
- Religious ministers	10	UK/Jamaica
- Funeral directors	10	UK/Jamaica
- Caterers	10	UK/Jamaica
- Florists	10	UK/Jamaica
- Care home staff	10	UK/Jamaica
- Venues for events	10	UK/Jamaica
Church members across all age groups	20	UK/Jamaica
Social club members	20	UK
Media professionals		
- Newspapers	5	UK/Jamaica
- Radio	5	UK/Jamaica
Rastafari members	10	UK/Jamaica
Maroons members	10	Jamaica
Kumina members	10	Jamaica

I recruited the first ten interviewees in the UK personally, mainly from those who had expressed a willingness to be interviewed. The others were the result of snowballing, a process where interviewees recommended others they thought would be interested in participating in the research.

There are certain groups within the Jamaican community, Rastafari, Maroons and Kumina who are reluctant to engage in research and for whom I felt I would need to engage with gatekeepers. ‘Gatekeepers’ are those people who can help with gaining access to fieldwork settings or with specific participants. In formal settings such as schools and hospitals key people in authority are the gatekeepers. In less formal settings “the role of the gatekeeper can become more akin to a guarantor for the

bona fide status of the researcher"' (Denscombe, 2017 p87). The latter was the case in gaining access to the three groups.

Gaining access to specific groups. Access to Rastafari, the Maroons and Kumina groups was brokered through gatekeepers. The significance of these three groups within Jamaican society is discussed in Chapter 3, but there are insufficient numbers of Maroons and Kuminas living in the UK to make interviewing them as a separate group worthwhile in terms of the data. Access to Rastafari in the UK was brokered via a friend while access to the groups in Jamaica was effected by different means. During a vacation in 2019 I attended an event at the Rastafari Indigenous Village in Montego Bay and made a contact who was prepared to act as gatekeeper on my return for the field study in 2020. One of the interviewees at the Rastafari Indigenous Village was willing to broker contacts in the Kumina community. On a previous vacation in 2014 I had made a contact in Accompong, the Maroon town, who was willing and happy to be interviewed. Further interviews may have been possible in Accompong had COVID-19 restrictions not been put in place.

Members of churches and social clubs provide a cross section of age and social status, while media professionals are often alerted to or seek out changes within the community.

4.3.2 The data collection methods

In this section the methods used to collect the data, their advantages and disadvantages, and the way they were applied in this study are discussed.

Table 4.2 Advantages and disadvantages of data collection methods used

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Documentation	Flexible. Portable. Information is permanent	Difficulty accessing documents. Dependent on others. Poor quality of documents.
Questionnaire	Economy, inexpensive to produce. Can be applied online or in person. Uniformity of questions. Can be applied anonymously, eliminating researcher contamination. Pre-coding for effective analysis.	Inflexibility of pre-coded questions. Not possible to check validity of answers. Inability to probe answers.
Interviews	Targeted. Focused on topic. Insightful, provides explanation and personal views such as perceptions, attitudes and meanings.	Possible researcher bias due to poorly articulated questions. Response bias. Inaccuracies due to poor recall. Reflexivity – interviewees say what they think the interviewer wants to hear.
Participant observation	Immediacy – actors observed in real time. Contextual, observation happens in situ.	Time-consuming.. Broad coverage difficult for sole researcher. Reflexivity – action altered when being observed. Costly to travel to different locations.

The use of more than one data collection method, mixed method design, combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, into a single study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p17). Eisenhardt (1989; p533-4) agrees that

> ‘multiple methods are essential to case study research’ as ‘rich descriptions are obtained by maximum confrontation through various mechanisms between the researcher and the field of study’.

As well as the advantages of using a mixed method approach, the methods for collecting the data had to be tailored to what was possible for a sole researcher on limited time and budget. Four methods were used to gather the data, documents, questionnaires which incorporated aspects of oral history, a form of interviewing that allows the interviewees to describe their version of historical events, and participant

observation. The latter covered a wide range of activities including attending forums, groups, arts events, ritual events, and general discussion with members of the Jamaican community.

4.3.3 Attending forums, groups and arts events

I attended the Black Theology Forum (BTF) at Queens Theological College and the Birmingham branch of the Jamaica Diaspora UK as part of my assessment of the need for research into this phenomenon. I continued to attend these groups throughout the period of the research, including their enforced movement onto the Zoom platform as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. I was able to keep abreast of current issues in the diaspora that may have impacted the research or to which the research could be helpful. The BTF provided opportunities to keep abreast of current religious thinking as each meeting included a presentation of recent doctoral research or other research relevant to black theological experiences, of which death rituals are a part. Indeed, it was at one of these meetings that I was made aware of research on Pentecostal theologies of death which included an analysis of the Christian relevance of nine-nights (Richards, 2021). The groups provided a source of encouragement and reassurance of the relevance of the research.

I attended two linked arts events in London which proved to be excellent sources of data. The first was the play *Nine-night* by Natasha Gordon which addressed the complexities and lack of understanding of the ritual by third generation Jamaicans. It was performed at the National Theatre in May 2018. I used the opportunity to ask five attendees how well they felt the play reflected the ritual. All, who appeared to be

between the ages of 30 and 50 years old, said they could not be sure as they were not certain of how the ritual should be performed. My attempts to secure an interview with the author were unsuccessful but many of the questions I would have asked her were answered in an interview she gave to The Guardian newspaper. This is discussed further in the section on documentation.

Linked to the play, also at the National Theatre, was a photographic exhibition of 50 years of mainly London black funerals by Charlie Phillips which documented the changes to the practices. One consistent feature is the choice of the hymn *How Great Thou Art,* which is sung at almost all Jamaican funerals and from which the exhibition derived its title. I was able to secure an interview with Charlie Phillips to ascertain his interest in funerals and to gain some insight into the changes he had observed over the years. Due to his busy schedule the interview was planned to take place after my return from the Jamaica period of my field study but it was unfortunately not possible due to the COVID-19 restrictions. A book had been produced to accompany the first exhibition 25 years earlier, and although out of print, I was able to access it via the British Library in London. As with Natasha's interview I discuss this further in the documentation section.

I attended a series of exhibitions in both London and Birmingham depicting various aspects of the experiences of the 'Windrush Generation' who were the subject of extensive media attention in 2018 following exposure in the Guardian newspaper of the harsh treatment and unlawful deportation they were encountering from the British government which included unlawful deportation. The events helped to contextualise the environment in which the death rituals were being practised, with their focus on Jamaican identity in crisis.

The advantages from a research perspective of attending these activities were the insights I gained into the current issues. It also enabled me to identify potential interviewees by discussing my research widely. The disadvantages are that they were time-consuming and expensive in terms of entrance fees and travel. However, this was offset by a small grant from the University of Birmingham. From a personal perspective the events were extremely enjoyable and informative beyond the scope of the research.

4.3.4 General discussion with the public

As a member of the Jamaican community in the UK I seized opportunities to discuss my research whenever I could. As noted in Chapter 2 I quickly reframed ‘death ritual’ into ‘death customs and practices’ due to negative associations with the former term. Approximately 90% of the people I spoke to considered the research a worthwhile endeavour. Most said they had been aware of some changes but had not considered their implications for heritage and their own national identity. It was from these conversations that I sourced the first 10 interviewees, drafted the questionnaire and formulated the process for identifying and categorising the rituals as presented in Chapter 5. During a vacation to Jamaica, prior to the field study, I repeated the process of discussing my research and was also able to source a few potential interviewees, and one potential gatekeeper to the Rastafari community. While there was wide support for the research a small number of people in both locations thought my time could be better spent researching more pressing issues within Jamaican communities such as poverty, health and justice inequalities.

4.3.5 Documentation

Yin (2014) asserts that documents play an important role in data collection. 'The most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources' (Yin, 2014 p107). In addition to books and journal articles which are standard documents to consult for research projects, I used newspaper articles, funeral orders of service, and funeral directors' brochures and pricelists. Natasha Gordon's interview in the Guardian newspaper enabled an understanding of her motives for writing the play (Gordon, 2018). Newspapers were also used to determine the extent of Jamaicans' concerns about death rituals and the nature of the concerns, as well as to gather evidence of the different types of rituals and their practices. Indeed, as explained in chapter one, the newspaper article *Death of the Nine-night* (Williams, 2015) was the original source of inspiration for this study, from which it takes its title.

I also consulted a series of UNESCO publications (1972; 1997; 2003; 2006; 2008; 2010; 2015; 2018), Jamaica government publications and statistics, unpublished theses, published photographs such as those contained in the books of Burke, (2012) Phillips (2014) and Gilroy (2007, 2011), and private photographs offered by a number of interviewees, published maps, magazines and websites. I was also given access to a personal collection of funeral order of service programmes dating back over 50 years by one of the interviewees, with which I was able to make comparisons with the contemporary programmes from the funerals I attended. These are discussed in the relevant sections of the thesis.

While documents were helpful in corroboration and augmentation of verbal information, they sometimes presented conflicting evidence. For example, the term

nine-night is sometimes hyphenated (Williams, 2015; Gouldson, 2020) and sometimes not (Lewis-Cooper, 2001; Senior, 2003). I have chosen to adhere to the hyphenated version as it appeared most frequently. Also pertaining to nine-nights, descriptions of the ritual and its purpose were conflicting. These inconsistencies and anomalies merited further investigation and analysis to ascertain if there was an authentic version as discussed in Chapter 5.

Accessing documents was sometimes problematic. For instance, the only copy of Charlie Phillips's book *How Great Thou Art?* (2014) was located in the British Library which does not have lending facilities. Documents have to be consulted in the London or Yorkshire buildings at pre-arranged times. This was both time-consuming and expensive in terms of travel. Similarly, literature on Jamaican history, identity and heritage, for instance by Seaga (1973), Nettleford (1998), Patterson (1982,1997), Devonish (2008), Paton and Forde (2012), held in the University of the West Indies library in Kingston could only be consulted on the premises for a fee, and due to the COVID-19 restrictions they were not accessible. Despite these issues, consulting documents was a valuable research method as a wide range of books, journal articles and newspaper articles were available online until the universities in the UK re-opened to allow physical access to documents. Fortunately, during the UK lockdown access to many documents were made available online. This was the main access route from March 2020 until June 2021 when the university library re-opened.

4.3.6 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are used widely for surveys, and indeed, one of its main advantages as outlined in Table 4.4 is that of economy, whether they are administered online or in paper form.

They allow for all respondents to be asked the same question(s) and, especially when administered anonymously, are unlikely to be contaminated by researcher interpersonal factors. It is relatively easy to pre-code the answers which can make analysis very effective. Surveys conducted on the internet can be designed to enable the completed questionnaires to be fed directly into a data file. This adds another level of accuracy as it removes all possibility of human error in transferring responses into the data entry (Denscombe, 2017, p183-200).

Where the main advantages of using questionnaires relates to the researcher, the main disadvantages sit with the respondents. Pre-coded questions can be frustrating for respondents and may deter them from replying. Similarly, pre-coded questions can bias the findings toward the researcher's, rather than the respondent's perspective, and questionnaires often offer very little opportunity for the researcher to check the validity of the answers given by the respondent, or probe for further meaning and in-depth explanations when unexpected answers emerge (Denscombe, 2017).

The questionnaire was originally planned as a survey tool to test interviewees' knowledge, understanding and use of the rituals prior to the main interview. However, following a pilot of both the questionnaire and the interview process, it proved more effective to incorporate the questionnaire into the interview process.

4.3.7 Piloting the questionnaire and interviews

A pilot group of five people I knew quite well was selected to test the efficacy of the questionnaire and the interview process before applying them more extensively. From this pilot group two changes were made to the planned administration of the questionnaire. The first three pilot interviewees were asked to complete the questionnaire on their own prior to the recorded interview while I waited quietly in the same room. They reported that the experience was more akin to an examination with me as the invigilator. They also reported that they would have liked the opportunity to clarify the answers they had given, even though I had emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers, and that the research was simply aiming to ascertain awareness, use of the customs and practices, and understanding of the rituals based on their own definition of understanding.

The first change was the addition of two further rituals to the questionnaire based on their feedback. The second was to complete the questionnaire *with* the interviewees prior to the recorded interview as:

a) it alleviated their feelings of discomfort arising from the long silence while they completed it,

b) where required they could clarify their answers,

c) it added more humour to the process which allowed the interviewees to approach the recorded part of the interview in a more relaxed state.

This change of approach meant that the questionnaire was no longer a survey in its purest sense, and, while there was the possibility of interpersonal factors influencing the data, I considered this approach would yield a richer seam of data.

4.3.8 Interviews

Interviews, according to Yin, are ‘one of the most important sources of case study evidence’ (Yin, 2014 p110), Englander adds that ‘The interview has become the main collection procedure closely associated with qualitative, human scientific research’ (Englander, 2012 p13) and suggests that it is a vital method for collecting data in phenomenological research. Indeed, for Husserlian phenomenology it is the sole method of data collection. Their popularity is centred on their flexibility, high response rate, the depth of information it is possible to gather, validity of the data, particularly in face-to-face interviews, and the minimal equipment needed. Denscombe (2017 p202-206) identifies four types of interviews used in social research, structured interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interview and group interview (or focus group). Each has its particular use in producing a specific type of evidence as outlined in Fable 4.3.

Table 4.3 Main features of interviews: Adapted from Denscombe (2017).

Types of interviews	**Main features**
Structured interview	Survey research. All interviewees asked the same questions. Standardisation of explanations. No prompting. No improvising. Most effective with sampled interviewees. Very popular for market researches and opinion polls.
Semi-structured interview	Specified questions but interviewer can prompt, probe, seek clarification and/or elaboration. More interviewee focused
Unstructured interview	Open-ended, interviewee lead. Used extensively for life- history or biographical research. Allows for flexibility and discovery of meaning.
Group interviews/ Focus groups	Allows for exploration of group norms and dynamics around issues. Used in therapeutic practices and in market research to gain feedback on particular issues.

The data from the pilot confirmed the semi-structured interview as the most appropriate method for clarifying and probing interviewees' opinions on the importance of the rituals, their perceptions of the rituals as heritage, and the effects on national identity of changes to the rituals. The semi-structured interview was also the most appropriate for collecting the data to be analysed using rational dialectic theory as it allowed interviewees to explain the meaning of the rituals and their responses to the changes. Rational dialectic theory's key premise is that 'the meaning of some phenomenon emerges in the moment through the interplay or struggle of competing possibilities of meanings' (Baxter et al, 2021 p7). Although usually associated with family therapy, it was applied to this study to determine the validity of the government's 'extended family' metaphor, as well as in response to the appeal for the theory to be applied in a range of different settings (Baxter et al, 2021 p16). However, there are a number of disadvantages to using semi-structured interviews. The main difficulties noted in the literature and which I encountered in this study are related to time and cost. For each hour of recorded interviews, it is estimated that it takes six to eight hours to transcribe (Denscombe, 2017). He also notes that they can be financially costly if much travel is involved, and that, too, was the experience of this study which required travel within the UK to three cities, as well as travel to Jamaica and within Jamaica. A portion of the travel costs were offset by the field study funding budget of the University of Birmingham**.**

4.3.9 Completing the questionnaires and carrying out the interviews

Following the pilot all the interviewees were offered the option of being interviewed in their own homes (to minimise inconvenience to them), at my home, or at a place of

their choosing. Of the thirty interviews in the UK 15 were conducted in my home, 9 in the home of the interviewee and 6 in venues chosen by them, which included cafes, theatre foyers, a church, and two on Skype due to the difficulties we encountered synchronising our schedules. While Skype interviews could have been a strategy to mitigate the obstacles posed by the pandemic, the rapid increase in the number of deaths in the Jamaican communities as a result of COVID-19 made the research topic an insensitive one to pursue as almost all the potential interviewees were experiencing bereavement of family, friends or colleagues.

Each interview began with an in-depth explanation of the purpose of the research, the withdrawal process, and the university's complaints procedure prior to interviewees signing the consent form (Appendix 4). The questionnaire was then completed as adjusted from the pilot (Appendix 5). This proved very effective as it allowed interviewees to seek clarification which centred predominantly around the meaning of the three options relating to the ritual which were

1) Are you aware of the ritual?

2) Have you used the ritual or observed it being used?

3) Do you understand the meaning of the ritual?

The recorded interviews were carried out following completion of the questionnaires, (Appendices 6 and 7). The interviewees were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers, that it was their *opinions* that were important and they could therefore be as expansive or as succinct as they wished. I checked again that they were still happy to be recorded before proceeding. This process of checking and reassurance was particularly helpful for some of the older interviewees who were initially nervous about being recorded.

The use of a small personal audio recorder made it necessary to sit quite close to the interviewees, which helped to reduce the perception or appearance of formality. I explained that I would not be taking notes and emphasised the conversational nature of the interview to help further with putting them at ease. This was essential to encourage the interviewees to share their stories, some of which formed the oral history element of the research. At the end of the interview each interviewee was made aware of the possible psychological effects of discussing death rituals that required them to draw on personal experiences. They were informed that as a qualified grief counsellor I may be able to help with any immediate issues. They were also supplied with a list of organisations offering support if issues surfaced later (Appendices 8 and 9). On a few occasions interviewees said they did not feel they needed the information for themselves, but knew someone for whom it could be useful. All but three of the interviewees said they were surprised by their knowledge of the rituals, some having previously professed their ignorance. Approximately 60% of the interviewees expressed feelings of euphoria that their knowledge and opinions had been useful and were eager to recommend other participants. This was consistent with the ‘therapeutic’ effect Denscombe describes as an advantage of interviews in that ‘people tend to enjoy the rather rare chance to talk about their ideas at length to a person whose purpose is to listen and note the ideas without being critical’ (Denscombe, 2017 p221).

Thirty interviews were conducted in the UK between 1st October 2019 and 31st January 2020. This was somewhat short of the 60 that were planned. There were two reasons for this shortfall. The first was the difficulty I experienced recruiting a representative sample of interviewees. Some of the potential interviewees such as ministers and funeral directors were extremely busy and required lengthy notice

periods. Indeed, I had scheduled some interviews in the UK to take place in June and July on my return from the Jamaican phase field study. Unfortunately, these were not possible because of the COVID-19 restrictions and travel disruptions. I was delayed in Jamaica until the end of July 2020. On my return these professionals were mired in the increased workload brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also seemed insensitive to ask individuals to take part in academic death research at a time when so many Jamaican families were not able to carry out the full range of their death rituals (Gov.UK, 2020) as discussed later in this chapter. Another related difficulty with recruitment was accessing younger interviewees in the 18-30 age group. Some of those approached felt they had insufficient knowledge of the death customs and practices to be of any help as they had not experienced many deaths. The second reason for the shortfall was the extensive time required for the observations. For example, some events exceeded eight hours excluding travel time, which in the case of travelling to Manchester and London from a base in Birmingham added considerably to the time for observations.

Contemporaneous transcription of the interviews and recording of events were also extremely time intensive. Despite this, the study was able to conduct formal interviews with representatives from all but two of the sample categories, namely florists and newspaper journalists in the UK. Useful information on the perceived changes to Jamaican death rituals in the UK and the effects on national identity were also provided via many informal discussions.

Eighteen formal interviews were conducted in Jamaica. Of these 6 were conducted at my accommodation, 4 at the interviewee's home, and 8 at venues chosen by the interviewee, which included the top of a mountain, a beach, three on the telephone and two on Skype, the latter due to the need for social distancing arising out of the

COVID-19 pandemic. This was a more significant shortfall than the UK sample, and while some of the reasons were the same, such as professionals needing longer notice and the restrictions of the pandemic, there were some differences.

I arrived in Jamaica on 4th February 2020 and began conducting face-to-face interviews six days later. The speed at which I was able to begin this process was due to securing a number of agreements in principle prior to leaving the UK. On arrival these were converted to actual interviews, which resulted in successful snowball sampling because, as with the UK cohort, the interviewees responded positively and felt that the interviews had been an ‘educational’ and ‘enriching’ experience. While snowballing was very effective at increasing numbers, it was limited in producing variety of representation as interviewees tended to refer their friends who were of similar age and backgrounds. This accounts for the high proportion of 49-60-year-olds in the Jamaican sample. Within that age group the data saturation was such that I declined further offers.

Another reason was that more Jamaicans were reluctant to be recorded than in the UK sample. They were, however, willing to engage in discussions about death rituals that were not recorded. At this stage I was sufficiently familiar with the content and order of the interview questions to weave them into the discussions and record their responses in writing as soon as possible after the discussions. Table 4.4 presents a breakdown of those interviewed.

Table 4.4 Interviews

	Number UK	Number Jamaica
Those involved professionally		
- Religious ministers	3	3
- Undertakers	2	3
- Caterers	2	0
- Florists	0	0
- Care home staff	1	0
- Venues	1	0
Church members across all age groups	20	10
Social club members	20	0
Media professionals		
- Newspapers	0	2
- Radio	2	0
Rastafari members	1	3
Maroons members	0	1
Kumina members	0	1

The numbers appear greater than 48 in the table as some interviewees fulfilled more than one category. For example, a Rastafari was also a member of the Kumina group and was able to provide information on both groups.

The recorded interviews ranged from 7 minutes to 40 minutes. The former being a young person in the UK who had little knowledge of the rituals and the latter a 64-year-old gentleman with extensive knowledge. The findings of these are discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

4.3.10 Participant observation

> Participant observation is an unobtrusive method of data collection that allows the researcher to gather information about lifestyles, cultures and beliefs… it focuses on the meanings behind the actions rather than overt aspects of behaviours… it calls for the researcher to participate in the situation (Denscombe, 2017 p234).

Participant observation is used widely in anthropology (Malinowski, 1922; Mead, 1928, Turner, 1967; Geertz, 1973) and in other settings, particularly where it is necessary to get an insider's perspective, provide depth and detail, and retain the naturalness of the setting. Its use has ranged from researching football hooliganism (Richard, 1995) to peer support in mental health (Andrew, 2019). One of the attractions of participant observation is that the key instrument is the researcher as a person. Many researchers choose this method based on their age, gender, ethnicity, qualifications, skills, social background and lifestyle, depending on the situation to be researched. It is also effective for covert observations. Participation observation as the term suggests requires the researcher to participate in the activities being researched.

It was chosen as a data gathering method based on my ethnicity, background, lifestyle and skills. As a Jamaican born in Jamaica and living in the UK diaspora I was able to attend death ritual events unobtrusively in both places. Additionally, I am skilled in building rapport quickly and easily which enabled me to gain information about transformation of the rituals and their effect on national identity in general discussions.

4.3.11 The observations

The research was planned to observe nine-nights, funeral services, graveside services, funeral receptions, memorial services and tombing. The latter is a practice observed in Jamaica but not in the UK. Table 4.5 shows the number of observations that were planned.

Table 4.5 Planned observations

Nine-nights	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Funeral services	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Funeral graveside services	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Funeral receptions	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Memorial Services	3-5	UK/Jamaica
Tombing	3-5	Jamaica

Due to knowledge of these events, based partly on my own observations from events I had personally attended, partly on anecdotal discussions with friends and family and partly on the literature, I produced a series of observation schedules, one for each of the four main events. These allowed for consistency in the issues observed and for ‘greater *emphasis on depth* rather than breadth of data’ (Denscombe, 2017 p231).

Observation schedule for nine-nights

1. When does the main nine-night celebrations take place?
   a) 9 nights after the death b) the night before the funeral c) other
2. Is the nine-night held:
   a) At the dead person's home b) at another relative's home c) at another venue – please specify
3. What activities are there at the nine-night?
   a) Prayers; hymns; music; dominoes; card games; rum drinking; other kinds of alcohol drinking;
4. What foods are served?
   a) Soup; b) chicken; c) curry goat/mutton; d) pork; e) rice and peas; f) plain rice; g) other

   Is there food on sale? Yes / no.
5. Is there a spirit/duppy (Jamaican term for the spirit of the deceased) table? Yes / No

   If yes what is on it? White bread; bammy (a flat cassava bread usually served fried at such events); fish; rum; other alcohol; other.
6. How long is the nine-night scheduled for?
   a) 1-2 hours; b) 3-4 hours; c) 5-6 hours; d) all night; e) other.

Observation schedule for funerals

1. How is the coffin transported? Hearse Car Horse & carriage
2. Type of coffin standard custom designed
3. Floral tributes standard custom designed
4. How is the coffin carried into the church/crematorium? Professional pallbearers; family pallbearers; on a trolley with family walking behind
5. Length of service 30 mins or less; 30-60 mins; 1-2 hours; more than 2 hours
6. Service includes; tributes; eulogy; sermon; open coffin; other
7. Dress colours; black; purple; white; bright colours
8. Use of choir; yes; no
9. Use of African drums; use of other instruments
10. Use of a band
11. Other

Observation schedule for burials

1. How is the coffin transported to the cemetery?
2. How is the coffin transferred from the vehicle to the grave?
3. How long is the graveside service? 30 minutes or less; 30-60 mins; 1-2 hours; more than 2 hours.
4. Are graveside hymns sung?
5. Use of choir; use of drums; use of other instruments; recorded music played.
6. Who fills in the grave? Family/friends; males/females; official workers.
7. Is entombment carried out? Yes; no.
8. If yes, by whom?

Observation schedule for receptions

1. Is the reception open to all who attended the funeral? Yes; no.
2. Where is the reception held? In a church hall; at the deceased home; at another relative's home; at a hired venue; other?
3. Are there tributes/speeches? Yes; no.
4. What food is served? Soup; fish; chicken; curry goat/mutton; rice; salads.
5. What, if any, music is played? Is the reception a party/dance?
6. How long is it scheduled for? 30 minutes or less; 30-60 minutes; 1-2 hours; 3-4 hours; more than 4 hours.

I had no schedules for grave diggings, candlelight services, grave parties and cremations as I was not aware of the first three, and had never attended a Jamaican cremation previously.

4.3.12 Gaining access to the events

Jamaican death events are rarely private affairs. They are usually announced on local Caribbean focused radio in the UK and on national radio and The Gleaner newspaper in Jamaica, and are often posted on social media. Family members will

frequently ask for the word to be passed around about death-related events. As a result of this I was able to attend these events quite unobtrusively as a researcher. I relied on friends, as well as the above methods to inform me of death-related events taking place among the Jamaican diaspora in London, Birmingham, and Manchester in the UK, and also in Jamaica. The ethics of attending these events are discussed in section 4.2.4. Table 4.6 outlines how access was gained to the various events.

Table 4.6 How access was gained to the various events

Event	Informed by my friends	Found on social media	Informed by family of the deceased
Grave digging	1	-	-
Nine-night	5	-	2
Funeral services	10	2	4
Burials	7	-	4
Cremations	1	-	1
Receptions/repasses	6	2	3
Grave party	-	-	1

4.3.13 Observing the events

A different approach was required for observing each event. Some, like the funeral services, required early arrival before the event to secure seats. For others such as the nine-nights, arriving before the start of the event could have been deemed disrespectful. Photography and videography were acceptable at public affairs, as they are widely used. In all cases respect for the deceased and the bereaved was

paramount. Detailed descriptions of the observations of the events are presented in Chapter 5.

Observing the nine-nights. I arrived at precisely the time announced for the start of the nine-night. In some cases, particularly when I attended with someone who knew the deceased relatives well, I was introduced, an explanation of my research offered and a request made to answer a few questions. It had not been an explicit intention to target recently bereaved for interviews. These were not interviews as the questions asked were for clarification about the events. However, additional information was sometimes volunteered, such as the timing of the event in relation to the date of death, the reasons for the choice of venue and the scheduled length of the event.

Some family members were surprisingly willing, indeed sometimes eager, to talk about their loved ones, the circumstances of their death, and the plans for the funeral. At the nine-night of a gentleman I did not know, I happened to speak to his wife. She was happy to garner me with quite detailed information about her husband's character, abilities, role as father, husband, friend as well as details about the plans for his funeral, despite the fact I did not know him. I attribute this to being of similar age to the bereaved, to my ability to build rapport easily and quickly, as well as to my ability as a trained counsellor to offer condolences in a manner that encourages trust. Indeed, these skills and abilities were essential to the data gathering process. It also helped enormously that I shared their Jamaican heritage and had some knowledge of the rituals.

*Observation of funeral services***.** I arrived at the church 30 – 60 minutes before the scheduled start time of the service so that I could observe the entire event from

advantageous seats. It was not unusual for a church with a capacity of 700 to reach that capacity 30 minutes prior to the start time of the service, particularly if the deceased had been a popular member of the community.

*Observation of burials***.** In order to secure a good view of the proceeding at the graveside I left the church as soon as the service ended and went directly to the cemetery. This was especially important if it had been a large funeral congregation as approximately 30 – 50 percent of the congregation attend the burial. Finding a suitable place to park could be time consuming if one arrived later than the cortege. In all but one of the burials I arrived prior to the cortege and was able to secure a place close to the grave from which I made my observations, took photographs and filmed short video clips on my phone. Although ethically this may appear questionable in the wider UK culture, at Jamaican burials the practice has become widespread. No one questioned my presence or these activities as other family members and friends were also engaged in photographing and filming the event.

An additional advantage at these events was that I contributed heartily to singing graveside hymns which was always appreciated by the family. At one of the burials I attended in Jamaica, although I had not attended the funeral service, I positioned myself close to the sepulchre. I offered comfort to a weeping relative who confided in me the nature of her relationship to the deceased. In this instance I was not simply a researcher collecting data, but someone from the community providing solace. When the service had ended and all the guests departed only the mason sealing the sepulchre and myself remained. I noticed that the floral tribute had not been placed on the sepulchre. He asked if I would do so, which I duly did. I mention these incidents to highlight the effectiveness of participant observation as a research tool, and also the nature of Jamaican funerals as community events, such that no one

questioned my place at these events, even though I did not know the deceased in most cases.

Observations of cremations. I attended one cremation service which included a coffin, and one where the body had been cremated previously and the ashes brought to the service in an urn.

Receptions/Repasses. The reception, or as it is referred to in Jamaica, the repass, is usually held after the burial, or after the funeral service. Food is usually served to those people who attended the funeral service and/or the burial, or in some instances people who attended neither. The venue for the reception/repass will usually be stated on the funeral programme, or in the information provided on social media. Receptions can vary in size, cuisine, venue and the inclusion of further speeches and tributes.

Grave digging. Although the grave digging ceremony/event occurs prior to the funeral, and sometimes before the nine-night, I am addressing it here because I had no knowledge of such ceremonies prior to my field study in Jamaica. I was alerted to these events by a friend who informed me that grave digging usually happened at the local cemetery (Lucea, Hanover) on Wednesdays. Having ascertained that no invitation was required I attended in order to create an observation schedule for future grave digging rituals. However, due to the restriction placed on such gathering as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to observe any further grave digging events. The event is therefore described in detail in Chapter 5.

Observation of a grave party. I was invited to attend an event to commemorate the birthday of a young woman who died seven months earlier at the age of 36, leaving behind five children. The details are described in Chapter 5.

4.3.14 Dealing with the initial effects of COVID-19 restrictions

In February 2020 the first incidence of COVID-19 was suspected on the island. It was a visitor from the UK who had, ironically, travelled to Jamaica to attend a funeral. On March 10th COVID-19 was confirmed (Jamaica Information Service 2020). She had been in contact with a large number of people as funerals are such public affairs in Jamaica. It resulted in the whole area where she had been visiting being quarantined. There was noticeable hostility toward people with UK accents, particularly on public transport and in public places.

Face-to-face interviews became increasingly difficult after this due to the social distancing requirements which limited the effectiveness of the small recorder in public places. Although I was able to conduct two further face-to-face interviews indoors after the social distancing requirements, the hostility towards visitors with UK accents intensified. I had to decide whether to return to the UK or continue with the research in Jamaica within the constraints posed by the restrictions and the ongoing hostility. In deciding to remain I increased my attempts to become better acquainted with the local dialect and accent which proved very effective in not being recognised as a visitor, particularly when travelling on public transport. Passengers on public transport, like many others on the island, were extremely fearful of the virus. It was reported on the local radio that a male passenger had been dragged from a bus and beaten by other passengers when he coughed three times without covering his mouth.

On 10th March the Jamaican government closed all air and sea ports when COVID-19 was confirmed. I was not expecting to leave until the end of May and I anticipated they would be re-opened by then. Unfortunately, flights to the UK did not resume until

24th July. Some of the professionals that I had scheduled for face-to-face interviews agreed to conduct them either on the telephone or on Skype. Although they were more time consuming, in that the consent forms and questionnaires had to be sent by email prior to the interviews, the interviews proved very effective. I was able to conduct five interviews in this way.

In the absence of actual events to observe, I looked to glean information from events posted on the web, mainly on YouTube, of funerals, nine-nights, and candle light services.

4.3.15 Processing the data

The study applied thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) to make sense of the extensive qualitative data collected. Thematic analysis is 'a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data.' (Clarke and Braun, 2017 p297). It is a a useful analysis tool 'to identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants' lived experience, views and perspectives, and behaviour and practices: 'experiential' research which seeks to understand what participants' think, feel, and do' (Clarke and Braun, 2017 p297).The themes elicited using this method are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. This enabled the categorisation of the rituals in Chapter 5, and the identification of the main causes of the changes to the rituals as discussed in Chapter 6. Analysis of the quantitative data, employed simple calculation of the numbers of participant who had made certain statements, expressed a preference for certain types of rituals to be retained, and who suggested the means by which rituals should be preserved. Quantitative analysis was also made of the different types of activities observed at the various

events, which facilitated the determination of which rituals were extinct, nearing extinction or still extant, as well as enabling the presentation of the interviewees preferred means of preserving the rituals. These are presented in Chapter 7.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the philosophy, design and data collection methods of the research. The planned use of a survey in the form of a questionnaire to ascertain knowledge, understanding and use of the death rituals was incorporated into the interview after the pilot revealed that approach to be more effective. The interviews, while being very effective in eliciting relevant information, proved more time-consuming to administer, transcribe, and analyse than anticipated, resulting in fewer being conducted. However, it was possible to gain significant data from the 48 interviews conducted. Younger interviewees were underrepresented in the study mainly due to their belief that they had little knowledge of the rituals. Further study designed to seek the views of younger Jamaicans will enable a more comprehensive account of their knowledge, use and understanding of the rituals. The restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic also significantly affected the number of interviews and observations of death ritual events.

While it was possible to conduct some interviews on Skype, Zoom, and over the telephone, these became increasingly difficult due to the insensitivity of the research subject at a time of the experience of excess deaths in both communities. However, the effectiveness of interviews conducted electronically highlighted the possibility for future use.

Participant observation proved very effective for gathering data on the established death rituals as well as for the new ones such as grave parties. Participants were willing to engage with the research in both Jamaica and in the UK. The majority found it a positive experience, so much so that despite the opportunity for anonymity many chose to be identified in the research.

In the following chapters the data is analysed in relation to the research objectives and questions.

CHAPTER 5

DEATH RITUALS PAST AND PRESENT

5.1 Introduction

This is the first of the three chapters that analyses the data gathered and aims to address research question one, that is, the nature of, and the extent to which the rituals are changing. The chapter uses data gathered via the questionnaire, interviews which include aspects of oral history for the older interviewees, ethnographic observations and relevant literature. It is comprised of 11 sections. Section 5.2 provides an overview of the conceptualisation of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ descriptions used to analyse the data. Section 5.3 describes past responses to death in terms of timescale from death to burial and compares the process to current practices. Section 5.4 looks at the ritual of grave digging, section 5.5 at nine-night, section 5.6 at set ups, section 5.7 at funerals and burials, section 5.8 at receptions and repasses, and section 5.9 at memorial rituals. Section 5.10 presents a categorisation of the symbolic meanings of both the private rituals described by the interviewees and the public ones observed at the events. This is followed by section 5.11, the chapter’s conclusion.

This chapter presents detailed accounts of rituals as they were practised in the past to enable an evaluation of the nature and extent of changes when compared to current practices. It uses Smith’s (2006) conceptualisation of heritage as memory, and focuses mainly on the recollections of interviewees 65 years and over, as well as corroborative documentary evidence. Analysis of the ethnographic observations of current practices applies both thin and thick description as discussed in 5.2. The

purpose and meanings of the rituals are interpreted using Turners (1967) conceptualisation of symbols. He posits that symbols are at the heart of rituals and an understanding of their meaning enables the rituals to be changed or new ones created without loss of meaning. The rituals are categorised into their symbolic meanings including protection from and protection for the spirit of the deceased, preparation of the deceased for the afterlife, and assisting in the grieving process.

5.2 The thick and the thin of description

Culture, Geertz asserts, is 'not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning' (Geertz, 1973 p5), and when culture is studied through the practice of ethnography what emerges in way of analysis is what Ryle (2009 p498) calls 'thick description'. This 'thick description' is the ethnographer's data, the analysis of which is 'sorting out the structures of signification… and determining their social ground and import' (Geertz, 1973 p9). Geertz goes on to say that 'a good interpretation of anything, a poem, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society – takes us into the heart of that which it is the interpretation (Geertz, 1973 p18). Drew in his article *5 Key principles of "thick description" research,* agrees that 'thick description involves writing detailed narratives or 'vignettes' explaining situations and background context' but that 'the goal is not just to describe situations, but also add details so that the reader understands the significance and complex cultural meanings underpinning observable scenario' (Drew, 2021 p1).

In this chapter death rituals as they were remembered by the older interviewees, that is, those between the ages of 65 and 98, are recorded as thin description. This serves two purposes, firstly it provides a baseline from which the changes can be

assessed, and secondly it provides a record for younger people for whom this knowledge is fast disappearing because a collection of the old practices is not available elsewhere. It is also a useful resource for those with academic and professional interest in ritual and heritage. These older practices are contrasted with the thick description of current practices observed in this study to demonstrate the nature and extent of the transformations.

Prior to a description of the rituals as they were remembered it is useful to consider the role ‘memory’ and the act of remembering plays in heritage. Smith (2006 p59) notes that ‘The forms of memory work most often associated with heritage are collective or social memory and habitual memory’. She goes on to add that the idea of collective memory commenced with the work of Halbwachs (1926; 1992) who argued that every group constructs an identity for itself through shared memories, that such shared memories are socially constructed in the present, and are collectively legitimized in that they make meaningful common interests and perceptions of collective identity. They work to build the collective and give it stability and continuity (Smith, 2006 p59). Memory therefore plays an important role in heritage as well as identity.

Hall points to the selectivity of personal and collective memory in relation to heritage,

> Like personal memory, social memory is also highly selective, it highlights and foregrounds, imposes beginnings, middles and ends on the random and contingent. Equally, it foreshortens, silences, disavows, forgets and elides many episodes which – from another perspective – could be the start of a different narrative (Hall, 1999 p5).

This selectivity was evident in the interviews, such that what appears in the descriptions of the rituals as they were performed in the past is a composite of individual memories to form a collective social memory in which the older

interviewees found stability as they sometimes struggled with the changes of the rituals. Memory also plays a part in ethnographic observations. While aiming to be objective, the observer is not immune from the effects of memory as things may be forgotten due to distractions or fatigue. To mitigate against this, written, photographic, audio and video recordings were widely used to collect the data.

5.3 Death rituals then and now

Death in Jamaica and within the Jamaican UK diaspora was, and to a great extent still is a community affair. This community emphasis is thought to have its roots in African customs as it is evident in many countries in Africa (Parrinder,1978; Mbiti 1981; Bonsu and Belk, 2003; Baloyi, 2014) and is a continuing influence of Jamaica's African heritage (Senior, 2003). It can also be viewed as a legacy from the days of slavery where the community was responsible for burying its dead (Senior 2003) without the intervention of the slave owners. Due to the interdependence of communities in the past, a death was not simply a loss for the immediate family. The deceased may have been the village or district's carpenter, seamstress, or a main farmer. The death impacted the whole community, and as such the community ensured that the correct rituals were carried out. Although there are changes to this community responsibility, which are discussed in Chapter 6, here the emphasis is on describing what was, and to some extent is still current in parts of Jamaica and within the Jamaican diaspora in the UK.

5.3.1 Past responses to death in Jamaica

Table 5.1 describes the immediate response to death garnered from the interviewees between the ages of 65 and 98 and relates to the time before widespread refrigeration of the body.

Table 5.1 Past responses to death

Day 1	If the death happened inside the house the body was moved outside, placed on sloping zinc, covered with ice and a bowl placed to catch the melted ice water. This, and the water used to wash the body were disposed of at a crossroad.
Day 2	The body was measured for a coffin which was made by local carpenters. The grave was dug. The diggers were sustained by rum supplied by the family or other community members. The local seamstress sewed the shroud and cap in which to bury the body. The ritual of ‘Set-up’, or ‘Keep-company’ which involved friends and some members of the community staying awake with the family throughout the night, took place. This ritual is described in greater detail in section 5.6.
Day 3	The burial took place, usually before noon, often before 8 a.m. if committal was to be carried out by someone such as a school teacher and not a minister. He or she conducted the service on route to work. Male members of the community filled in the grave encouraged and motivated by songs and hymns sung by the other attendees. A meal was served at the deceased house
Day 9	The ritual of nine-night took place which served the dual purpose of celebrating the deceased’s life and assisting the spirit of the deceased on to its final resting place.

Physical, emotional and financial support were offered to the family of the deceased. Physical support involved caring for children, washing, cleaning and cooking. Emotional support was delivered in whatever form best suited the bereaved which could be talking, siting silently with them, ensuring that the bereaved were aware of, and carried out the many private rituals required such as tying red ribbons in children’s hair, placing tape-measures over doorways, or wearing panties inside out.

The meanings of these and other private rituals are discussed in the tables in section 5.10. Financial support was often provided in the way of food, clothes and other essentials to enable the bereaved to carry out the death rituals effectively. Services such as making the coffin, sewing the shroud and digging the grave were provided as tokens of support to the bereaved for which no payment was required. One interviewee described the community response to her sister's death.

> When I was about seven years old my mother lost her first daughter, and she [the daughter] was only 13 years old and to see what a community, what a community spirit did for my community and the family, was an eye opener. I was only seven when she passed and the funeral that takes place, I still remember it like it was yesterday. It was very emotional, it was, everybody comes up [played a part]. They say it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to bury a child that age. And that is exactly what happened in the 50s. it wasn't a money and cost [issue] (Female aged 75 Jamaica).

Nearly 70 years had intervened since the event described by the interviewee. Like many of her age, she holds nostalgically to the memory of a greater community response to death.

The first of what can be termed a public ritual was removing the body from the place of death to the outside of the house to be covered in ice. This was followed by the grave-digging, the 'set-up', the funeral and burial, the reception (meal), and finally the nine-night as outlined in table 5.1. The sequence of these public rituals was less prescribed when it became possible to refrigerate the body and speed of burial due to the body's decomposition was less imperative. There is now no specific time scale in which the rituals must be carried out. The disruption to the timing of the rituals, particularly the increase in time between death and the final disposal of the body is one of the main complaints of the interviewees. One interviewee shared his distress at the protracted time it took to bury his brother.

> The thing is, when you're involved in it..., at the time all I was thinking was that I couldn't wait for the burial to come, I mean, the longer he's there I just wanted to have his body laid to rest (Male aged 65 UK).

What happens currently as reported by the interviewees, and as I observed at the events, is outlined in table 5.2. I have used the ritual activities in this table to describe and discuss the events rather than the timescale in which they are presented in table 5.1, to minimise the risk of repetition.

Table 5.2 Current responses to death

First ritual	Person dies. Family arranges for the body to be taken to a funeral parlour. Funeral director offers a range of services. Members of the community visit the family to offer condolences. Some bring food and drink; others arrive expecting food and drink. This visiting will continue for nine days and nights or until the funeral if that is longer.
Second ritual	Grave digging is organised. Diggers can be professional or a combination of professionals and friends and family. Diggers are fortified with rum and beer. In most cases this is a social event with food and drink provided by the family, sometimes a band or a sound system [a DJ with big speakers] is hired and there are vendors selling snacks, drinks, cigarettes etc. This ritual does not occur in the UK.
Third ritual(optional)	Candle light service. A vigil which can be arranged by family or close friends and consists of tributes to the deceased. Sometimes a lay preacher delivers a sermon. This ritual does not happen in the UK.
Fourth ritual	Nine-night. A gathering to help the spirit of the deceased depart to its final resting place. It happens on the ninth night after the death traditionally but is now often delayed.
Fifth ritual	Set-up. The night before the funeral. Members of the community sit with the family. See section 5.6.
Sixth ritual	Funeral. A ceremony to celebrate the life and mourn the death of the deceased.
Seventh ritual	Cremation/burial (sometimes the body is cremated prior to the funeral and the ashes are brought to the funeral service)
Eighth ritual	Reception or repass. A post funeral/burial meal sometimes referred to in the UK as a wake.
Ninth ritual (optional)	Memorial service/party. A ritual to mark an anniversary of the deceased, including erecting a headstone.

Where the body was previously laid out in the yard of the house as the first public ritual, contacting a funeral director is now the private replacement. The first public

event in Jamaica has now become the grave-digging, a ritual which has never been practised in the UK due to laws which prescribe the role exclusively to cemetery employees. The grave digging is followed by the nine-night, the set-up, the funeral, the burial and the reception/repass. In each case I describe the ritual as remembered by the older interviewees followed by my own observations of current practices.

5.4 Grave digging

Burial was the only form of disposal of the corpse used during slavery in Jamaica, a tradition practised in both Africa and Europe. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, for approximately 80% of Jamaicans (Cross, 2018) it is the preferred means of disposing of the body being 'traditional', but also because family members were, and are still wherever possible buried in the grounds of the family home, often quite close to the building as they are deemed to still be part of the family, and as Chevannes (1994 p26) notes 'the family plot spatially and symbolically links the ancestor with their living descendants'. Additionally, Christian burial liturgy asserts that humans are made from the earth and must therefore return there. Although the liturgy 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust' could be interpreted in favour of cremation, many Jamaican Christians, having no early experience of cremation, held firmly to the 'dust to dust' meaning of burial. As one interviewee pointed out,

> I've come from a tradition where everybody, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust we go back into the ground from whence we came, so to speak, I know cremation seem to be more popular these days, but within the Black culture it has always been burials (Male aged 67 UK).

Burial necessitates digging a grave to accommodate the corpse. The way in which this is done is dependent on whether the body is to be buried on family land or in a

cemetery, and whether the event is organised by the family or is carried out by professionals as part of a funeral package or pre-paid funeral plan.

5.4.1 Grave digging as remembered by older interviewees

The older interviewees recalled that men of the community volunteered to dig the grave. They began by pouring rum onto the spot to be dug, (no one referred to it as libation, although it is referred to as such by younger more African conscious Jamaicans) and took it in turn to dig. They were sustained by singing, rum, and food provided by the family and other members of the community. The grave was dug as early as possible to avoid working in the heat of the midday sun. Members of the community 'passed by', that is, visited, for varying lengths of time to offer help and encouragement and to partake in the singing and the banter which was integral to the event. This is contrasted with grave digging as it is carried out today based on accounts of interviewees of all ages and on my own observations solely in Jamaica, as this ritual does not occur in the UK.

5.4.2 Ethnographic observations of grave digging

What is described below consists of the information from the interviewees, my own observation of a grave digging ritual and from relevant literature.

Once the grave digging team, which is often made up of family and friends, and sometimes a professional mason, has been assembled, a libation of white rum is poured to the spirit of the ancestors for permission to break the ground for the

purpose of digging a grave. Libation is symbolic communication with the ancestors, a practice still prevalent in many African countries (Mbiti, 1981).

A prayer may be said as the 'breaking ground' ritual is used in Jamaica for other purposes where the earth is to be disturbed. This includes house building or even larger projects such as schools, shopping centres, hospitals and hotels. It is also used in farming and mining and by government officials. This is in contradiction to the government's reluctance to acknowledge and promote the influence of African heritage practices (Nettleford 1998), and their use of libation is incongruent with Christianity's tenet that it is not possible or desirable to communicate with the deceased. What is interesting is that many Christians do not perceive this as incongruent, accepting as they do that pouring a libation is simply part of Jamaica's customs (Chevannes, 1994).

The digging process, whether on private land or in public cemeteries still begins early in the day, typically at 6.30 a.m. so that much of the work can be completed before the full heat of the midday sun. Throughout the process the diggers are still supplied with rum and/or beer, but this is increasingly the sole responsibility of the family, and not of the whole community. They are still supplied with food, typically curry goat, chicken and rice by the family. Mbiti (1981 p115) notes the use of goat dishes in grave digging rituals in some African countries, another African practice which has been retained in Jamaica.

At its simplest, the diggers will be visited at various times by family, friends, and members of the community who may also partake in the food and drink as shown in Fig 5.1.

Fig 5.1 Grave digging on family land in Jamaica. Source: Researcher's image

In more elaborate events music is provided, ranging from a basic radio to a full 'sound system' [banks of huge speakers] with an accompanying DJ. There may be vendors selling snacks, cigarettes and drinks (although, as discussed further in Chapter 6, this is relatively new and one of the changes complained about by some of the interviewees). One interviewee, commenting on the changes said,

> Then the grave digging is the other one… it's like a dance hall now. They have sound systems set up and vendors selling food, vendors selling liquor, snacks

> and all this stuff. And everybody in the community, everybody that the person knew will pass through the grave digging. They will pass by, if its only for 10 minutes, five minutes (Male aged 60 Jamaica).

The same interviewee told of a deceased's liking for a particular type of music which was played throughout the whole grave digging event.

> I went to the grave digging for Stanley, a guy that lived in the community, and he loved Studio One music, [A Jamaican reggae record label] that's all he would listen to. So at the grave digging that's all they played… all day (Male, 60, Jamaica).

Graves in Jamaica are now built mostly as individual vaults or sepulchres for a number of reasons. Firstly, it enables two procedures to be combined, that of the burial and the erecting of a headstone. It negates the need for family members who have travelled from abroad to attend the funeral to make a return trip to witness the laying of the headstone, and also reduces the cost of purchasing and erecting a separate headstone. Secondly, it prevents theft of or from the coffin or casket as some corpses are buried with valuables and weapons, the former to enable a good reception from the ancestors and the latter to a) protect itself from manipulation from obeah men and women, as discussed in Chapter 3, who may want to engage the deceased spirit in nefarious acts, and b) to seek revenge on those responsible for the deceased's death. It is rare that the coffin or casket is placed directly into the earth as done previously, but this continues to be the practice in the UK diaspora. When the hole is completed, the structure that will be the receptacle for the coffin or casket is built using breeze blocks and concrete and may be decorated as shown in Fig 5.11. As a result of this the event can last all day. The evolution of this ritual was summarised by one of the interviewees.

> Over the years it started with the actual burial where in the late 60's you dig a hole, you put the body down in it and you put the dirt back on top on it. Then it

> moved into the 80s when my mother died, they started to build concrete vaults where there is no dirt going back on top of the coffin. You put the coffin in and then you put a concrete slab on top of it. You might put a headstone, you might not. Now, we've even evolved again. Now, instead of going six feet down in the ground, it's now four feet. So they cut two feet off, and I guess that's to save on money in terms of making the vault because building materials are expensive (Male aged 60 Jamaica).

The event I observed did not have music but had all the other components described above. Having no schedule for the event an extract from my field study journal gives an account of the event. What follows is a thin description of the grave digging I observed.

> I arrived at 10.30 a.m. to find a hole of approximately 4 feet by 5 feet nearing completion. There were three men in the hole and banks of heavy clay soil to the side of it. The gentleman in charge signalled to the men mixing concrete 15 feet away to bring more concrete and breeze blocks.
>
> These were brought using a chain-gang conveyer-belt operation to enable the interior structure of the sepulchre to be built. It was slow and laborious work with much measuring and levelling.
>
> There were three vendors on the road at the entrance to the cemetery selling drinks and snacks, and one inside the cemetery. The vendors were the only women present, and as I stood by the side of the grave I wondered if this was an exclusively male domain.
>
> In addition to the men working, there were 12 others either close to the grave looking on or further away sitting on graves. Most (including the workers) were drinking rum or beer. There was an empty brandy bottle nearby.
>
> I enquired of an onlooker (a gentleman with an amputated leg who moved around on crutches and sat down for most of the time) what time the digging had begun. He said they arrived at about 6.30 a.m.
>
> I watched the process for a while before wandering off to look at other graves in the cemetery, to source lunch and to seek shelter from the beating sun. I returned 90 minutes later to find many more people present, at least 4 times the number that was there previously.
>
> There were many more women, and four of them, including a girl in school uniform, were sitting very close to where the sepulchre was being built. There were many more people drinking rum. Two young women, family members, weaved through the crowd filling plastic cups with rum and coke. There was a vibrant party atmosphere, despite the absence of music.

Building continued until the structure reached two feet above the ground. There were copious instructions being given to the men carrying out the building, so much so that the main builder, in very strong and colloquial language pointed out that those giving the instructions were not the ones offering to help. My enquiries revealed that the gravediggers were a combination of professionals, family and friends.

Five hours after I arrived the roof of the sepulchre was erected. A space had been left into which the casket would be inserted on the day of the burial after which the sepulchre would be sealed.

The grave was for an elderly lady whose funeral was due to be held three days later on the Saturday. Funerals in Jamaica often take place at the weekends in contrast to the UK where they never occur at weekends.

In addition, I observed many young men contributing little to the event in terms of encouragement or physical help, but partaking liberally of the rum provided by the family and smoking marijuana in small groups away from the main event.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3 shows the sepulchre being built.

Fig 5.2 Men building a sepulchre. Source: Researcher's image.

Fig 5.3 The sepulchre nearing completion. Source: Researcher's image.

The public ritual that follows the grave-digging is the nine-night.

5.5 Nine-night

The nine-night is an event that was traditionally held nine nights after the death of the person (Senior, 2003) and as such took place *after* the grave had been dug and the body buried. This was the process the older interviewees recalled (Table 5.1). With current practices it is possible for the nine-night to take place before the grave is dug, as burials rarely happen within nine days of death. While some adhere strictly to the nine days, others are more flexible and the timing of the nine-night may be closer to the funeral. It was the concerns for changing nine-night practises, as explained in chapter three, that inspired this study. To understand these concerns and the confusion surrounding this ritual it is helpful to describe the purpose and function of the nine-night, of which there are two main views, both consistent with van Gennep (1960) and Turner's (1967) concept of liminality, and Mbiti's account of African death rituals (Mbiti 1981).

A commonly held view of the purpose of the nine-night is that it allows the spirit of the deceased to depart the earth where it had been lingering since death, and officially join the land of the dead. Another view, thought to have been developed during slavery, is that it took nine nights for the spirit of the deceased to travel from Jamaica back to Africa to re-join family. In each case the nine-night represents the end of the liminal period (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967) and marks the transition from one state to another not just for the deceased but for the bereaved as it marked the official end of the mourning period. The traditional performance of the ritual was descried by the older interviewees.

5.5.1 Nine-night as remembered by the older interviewees

Friends and members of the community gathered at the home of the deceased where activities were designed to reminisce about the life of the deceased as well as to mourn the death. The activities also encouraged a joyous transition of the spirit of the deceased from this world to the other. Solemn hymns or songs were sung. For Christians this was from the popular hymn book, the 'Sankey', which was originally published in 1873 by Ira Sankey, a European American gospel singer and composer, and has remained popular among many Jamaicans. Due to the low level of literacy or lack of affordability of the hymn book, someone known as the 'tracker' called out the lines of the songs. Songs such as '*nearer my God to thee*' (Adams, 1841), acknowledged that death brings the deceased nearer to God. These mournful songs included *God be with you till we meet again; What a gathering* (known to Jamaicans by the first line 'when the roll is called up yonder' and is also a popular graveside song); *Rest in the lord*, and *The Christian's "good-night*; (also known by the first line 'Sleep on beloved, sleep and take thy rest'). Sometimes a religious minister was present or some other church official prayed and offered condolences to the family. In some cases, particularly of devout Christians, this was all the nine-night consisted of, akin to European Christian mourning of the dead. More often though the nine-night included some or all of the following activities:

Remembering the deceased. Attendees at the nine-night took the opportunity to recall tales of the deceased that reflected their personal relationship and experiences with him or her, focusing on both desirable and undesirable qualities, known and unknown to others, and presented with humour.

The 'duppy table' was a table covered in a white tablecloth and prepared with rum, fried fish, bammy and hard-dough bread. The contents of the table could not be touched until after midnight when it was deemed the spirit of the deceased took its share of the fare as sustenance for the journey to the spirit world. Following this, others could partake in the table's provisions. One interviewee gave a detailed account of the other content of the 'duppy table'.

> Oh, there's always a white tablecloth, and on the tablecloth, they put like a bottle of white rum, and there's the picture, and the lamp. In those days they did not have electricity in a lot of the villages so you'd have the lamp, you'd have the Bible on there, you'd have various other things on there. Artefacts from the person's walk of life which were important to him or her were placed on there. Sometimes fruits were on there. It was laid out in such a way that people coming would come up [and inspect or admire the table] (Male aged 67 UK).

Rum was used to pour a libation at the beginning of the proceedings, and drunk extensively throughout the night. Other drinks included 'chocolate tea' and 'coffee tea' with 'tea' signifying any hot beverage. The former being a milky drink made by boiling chocolate made with local cocoa beans, and the latter made similarly with locally grown coffee beans. Occasionally herbal or 'bush-tea' was drunk. The food consumed at a nine-night event was similar to that provided on the 'duppy table'. However, to the fried fish, bammy and hard-dough bread, were added curry goat and rice, and 'mannish water', a soup which includes the testes of the goat and is believed to enhance sexual potency in men.

Music, dancing and games. Older interviewees reported making their own music from a variety of home-made instruments such as graters, washing boards, shakers, wooden sticks and drums. Playing music and dancing were spontaneous and open to all.

> Yeah man. You have the person that lick [bang] the Dutch pot cover, and the one who lick the bamboo joint, and you have one round ya so whe de lick an ole kerosene pan or ole wash pan. Well those a what we have in a fi we days. Coming up now, we use the drum made out of goat skin. Di big drum, and de little drum. We call the little drum 'tickle drum' we use it with the two sticks (Female aged 79 Jamaica).

Dominoes and cards were played, and ring games such as 'Emmanuelle Road', a game which required speed and dexterity if one's fingers were not to be crushed. Heavy stones are passed quickly from one person to another while a song which includes the words 'finger mash no cry, gal and bwoy, memba a play wi deh play [we're playing], gal and bwoy' is sung. While the game was mainly played by children, (gal) girl, and (bwoy) boy, and reminds them memba that it's just a game and not to cry if they get hurt; at nine-nights adults joined in.

5.5.2 Ethnographic observations of nine-nights

I attended six nine-nights in the UK and observed one on the internet. While there were some elements of the event as described by the older interviewees, there were also a number of differences. The similarities with the original performance of the ritual were prayers, food, music, dominoes, drinking and dancing. However, not all the activities were observed at all the events as shown in Table 5.3

Table 5.3 Activities at nine nights

Activities at nine nights	Number of events
Prayers	1
Hymns	0
Dominoes	4
Music	7
Dancing	7
Rum/other alcohol drinking	7
A minute's silence	1

At two of the nine-nights, teams of men and a small number of women played dominoes. At one, where the deceased had been the manager of the very successful dominoes team, the team attended dressed in their red and black uniform. (This was also replicated at the funeral).

Music, dancing and drinking of alcoholic beverages were consistent at all the events. The music was no longer home-made, in all cases it was recorded and played on a 'sound system'. The dancing was consistent with that found at parties and night clubs, and the only game being played was dominoes, which occurred at four of the events. Prayers were said at only one of the events and at another there was a minute's silence for the deceased. There were, however, a number of differences, the first being the timing of the nine-night. Of the seven events two took place on the ninth night, while the others took place at times closer to the funeral, which in two cases were considerably longer than nine nights.

Table 5.4 Number of nights after death

Number of nights	**Number of events**
Nine nights	2
Longer than nine nights	5
Total	**7**

Another of the differences was that most of the nine-nights did not take place at the deceased's house. One explanation offered by an interviewee was that the deceased's house was too small to facilitate the ritual, and given the large numbers in attendance was true for all but one of the events I observed. Four of the events were held in night clubs, one in a community centre, and one was an open-air event that took place outside the block of flats where the deceased had lived. The latter could, perhaps, be described as the 'deceased's home'. Only one took place *inside* the deceased's home.

Table 5.5: Venue of nine night

Venue of nine night	**Number of events**
Home	1
Community centre	1
Night club	4
Open air	1
Total	**7**

It was at the outdoor event that what could be deemed a ‘duppy table’ was present. It was not, however, covered in a white table cloth, but in the Jamaican flag against a backdrop of Rastafari colours of red gold and green, two potent symbols of Jamaican national identity. On the table were fruits, a pink drink in champagne glasses and a photograph of the deceased as shown in Fig 5.3 The table was not referred to specifically as a ‘duppy table’ and unfortunately, I was not able to remain at the event until midnight so was unable to observe what happened to the table at that time.

Fig 5.4 The 'duppy table' at a nine-night. Source: Researcher's image

Food is an area where similarities and differences were observed in almost equal proportions. Table 5.6 shows the food served at each event. While there was chicken, soup, curry mutton (an adaptation of curry goat) and rice at each event, there were also other traditional Jamaican foods, such as patties, cow foot stew, fried dumplings and salt fish fritters. Food was cooked by the family only at the events that were held at home, the others used hired caterers, and at one there was a printed

menu. At the event held inside the home drinks were provided by the family and supplemented by bottles of alcohol brought by many of the attendees.

Table 5.6: Foods served at events

Food/dishes	Grave digging	Nine night	Reception/Repass
Chicken	1	6	9
Rice and peas	1	4	9
Fish	-	4	9
Curry goat/mutton	1	5	8
Salads	-	5	8
Hardough bread	-	4	8
Bread rolls	-	1	8
Plain rice	-	4	7
Soup	-	5	6
Desserts	-	1	4
Patties	-	2	-
Vegetable curry/stir fry	-	-	2
Dumplings	-	2	-
Cow foot	-	1	1
Fritters	-	1	-

At three of the events family members wore t-shirts with the deceased’s picture printed on them as shown in Fig. 5.5.

Fig 5.5. Family members wear t-shirts with the face of the deceased. Source: Researcher's image.

At one, in addition to the picture, the children of the deceased identified their relationship to the deceased by adding 'DAD' on the back of the t-shirt as shown in Fig 5.6

Fig 5.6 Daughter wearing T-shirt to show relationship to the deceased. Source: Researcher’s image.

At another there were banners and balloons on which were printed the deceased’s picture, while at others there were no physical indications that the events were nine-nights, making them indistinguishable from a normal club night.

What my observations demonstrate is that each event contained the fundamentals of the nine-night as described by the older interviewees, but applied selectively. The

reasons for the changes are addressed in greater detail in Chapter 6 but it is worth noting here that the event that included the largest number of the original activities was a Rastafari nine-night. It was held on the ninth night despite the body still being held in police custody due to the death being the result of a hit-and-run accident which was still being investigated. The event included a duppy table, it was held within the vicinity of the home of the deceased, the food was prepared by the family, and there was evidence of the identity of the deceased in photographs. This appeared to be an attempt to adhere to the traditional rituals with additional emphasis placed on national identity in the form of the Jamaican flag and the banks of balloons in the Jamaican flag and Rastafari colours as shown in Fig 5.7

Fig 5.7 Balloons in Jamaican flag and Rastafari colours at a nine-night. Source: Researcher's image.

Another ritual that, like the nine-night is out of sequence is that of the set-up, in that it was previously performed prior to the nine-night but now generally happens afterwards.

5.6 Set-ups

The set-up is a ritual that can be wholly private or semi-public. It is held traditionally the night before the burial and shares some of the activities of the nine-night as described in 5.5.1, particularly singing from the ‘Sankey’ and reminiscing about the deceased. The purpose of the set-up is to support the family in preparation for the ordeal of the burial the following day.

5.6.1 Set-ups as remembered by the older interviewees

The set-up event, which is also referred to as ‘keep-company’ (Lewis-Cooper, 2001), traditionally took place the night before the funeral, on the second night after death when the burial was held three days after death. It was where friends and a few members of the community stayed with the family overnight to mourn with them and to provide physical, emotional and spiritual support for the ordeal of the burial. There was not then a separate funeral service in a church or elsewhere. The set-up was a smaller scale version of the nine-night as they shared similar features, including the food and drink served, singing from the ‘Sankey’, prayers and reminiscences about the deceased. Those attending the set-up generally went with the family to the burial the following day as they were conducted early in the mornings,

> ‘before eight o’clock as sometimes it was the school teacher who would conduct the funeral, and they would need to do the funeral before going to school’ (Female age 79 Jamaica).

The function of the nine-night and set-up have become blurred as the funeral service now takes place later in the day, often in the afternoon. The tradition of staying up with the bereaved the night before the burial is described by Mbiti as a continuing

African practice. ‘Neighbours and relatives bring beer and food; some play musical instruments, others sing funeral dirges and dance. This is intended partly to please the spirit of the dead person, and partly to comfort the bereaved family (1981 p153). This custom was also an important ritual for the Irish Christian slave owners which was practised by them in Jamaica and there are other later similarities such as sitting with the deceased in the coffin the night before the funeral. Van Gennep (1960) notes this ritual as an important stage in the death process as the final preparation for the physical separation of the deceased from the living and is found in many cultures.

5.6.2 Ethnographic observations of set-ups

I was not able to observe a set-up in Jamaica, as by their nature they are often restricted to family and close friends, and are generally held within the home of the deceased or in that of a close relative. During the research there were two deaths in my own family in the UK. The set-up consisted of close friends and family, but as the majority of my family members are not religious, we did not have songs from the ‘Sankey’, nor did we have formal prayers. We did, however, drink rum and other alcoholic beverages, reminisce about the deceased, and provide support to each other, particularly those who had active roles in the funeral.

With regard to current practices, after this night people may no longer be able to visit the body at the funeral home. There may, however, be one last opportunity to see the deceased before interment or cremation. This is at the funeral, which is discussed in section 5.7.

5.7 Funerals and burials

The funeral was, and still is, the culmination of the preparation for disposal of the body. It is the point at which, according to van Gennep (1960) final separation takes place. Unlike the set-up, it is a very public ritual to which no invitation is required. Funeral services, including the place of interment, are announced in the Daily and Sunday Gleaner newspapers in Jamaica, with or without a photo of the deceased, on national radio in Jamaica, and are widely circulated on social media platforms in the UK. Jamaican funerals are events that allow family, friends, and members of the community who knew the deceased to say their final goodbyes. Indeed, attendees at a funeral may not have known the deceased and attend in a supportive role to the family. At one of the funerals I attended I asked a fellow attendee of the capacity in which he knew the deceased. ‘Mi never know ‘im personally, but ‘im was from our district. When I hear there was a coach coming up, I book on it’ he said. He was essentially saying that the mere fact that the deceased was from his district in Jamaica was sufficient reason to travel from London to Birmingham to attend his funeral. He was also making reference to the fact that for some funerals, friends and family hire coaches to transport Jamaicans from other cities to attend funerals. In the following section I discuss funerals as they were described by the older interviewees. I have combined the funeral and burial rituals as in the past the funeral service was conducted at the graveside.

5.7.1 Funeral and burial as remembered by the older interviewees

On the morning of the funeral the family, often fatigued from the set-up and the emotions of bereavement, was accompanied to the burial by those who shared the

set-up the previous night. The coffin was carried by pall bearers directly to the grave, which was often very close to the house, and a short committal service was held. The celebrant, with no requirement for religious ministry, as mentioned earlier, was often a person of standing in the community. Such people, be they teachers, doctors, or shop keepers conducted the service in the morning before proceeding to their work. The coffin was lowered into the grave and male family and friends filled it in, encouraged by Christian hymns and choruses with a focus on the afterlife. A favourite was *In the sweet by and by* (Bennett and Webster, 1868) a song which speaks of a reunion when those present have also died. These songs were sung loudly and with conviction of the deceased's place with God and the ancestors. One of the interviewees, a seventy-five-year-old lady, became very wistful at the memory of graveside singing and asked if she could demonstrate the actions of one of the songs to me. As she sang the chorus below she demonstrated how they shook hands with each other during the third line, waved during the fourth, and performed a mock sitting action during the last two lines of the song.

> We'll soon be done with trouble and trials
> On that bright shore on the other side
> I'm going to shake my hands with the elders
> I'm going to tell all the people 'good morning'
> I'm going to sit down beside my Jesus
> I'm going to sit down and rest a little while

At the grave a mound was created from the excess earth displaced by the coffin on top of which trees or shrubs were planted to mark the burial spot. Often a ring of white stones was placed around the mound as the oldest interviewee recalled,

> They provide [made provision] for the grave, put the dead in the coffin, and then they cover it up with some dirt, they press white stones around the grave and plant some crotons (Female aged 98 Jamaica).

The most popular trees were croton and coffee rose because, as noted by Senior (2003 p220) ‘they symbolize everlasting life since they will survive the longest drought and “rise again” to thrive and bloom’. Other plants such as peas and beans were planted as it was believed they had properties to ensure the spirit of the deceased did not wander around to molest the living. The planting of trees on graves was, and is still practised in some African cultures perhaps the most published being that of the tree on Nelson Mandella’s grave, indicating a continuation of the African practices in Jamaica. Such graves marked by trees are still evident in Jamaica, predominantly those on family property. Fig 5.8 is my own grandmother’s grave marked by a croton tree. There was no necessity for inscribed headstones as the family was aware of the individual’s graves. In addition, the cost of headstones made them prohibitive. Indeed, this is the way many of the graves are marked on my own family’s burial ground with only some of the later graves marked with headstones. The guardian of the graves, my uncle, explained that headstones were introduced when family members began moving further afield to find work. They became necessary for members of the family without knowledge of the owners of the graves and were also made affordable by the increased earnings of family working in the towns and cities of Jamaica, and those who had moved to work abroad. This is true for many other families in the rural areas of Jamaica and perhaps signalled the beginning of the global influence on changing Jamaican death rituals discussed in Chapter 6.

Fig 5.8 Grave marked by a croton tree. Source: Researcher's image.

The main point with regard to the funeral service is that it was combined with the burial service, not separate as is the current practice. Interviewees and the literature (Senior, 2003 p150) attribute the changes to the influence of Christian funeral

services which, during the period of colonisation, were conducted in churches with ministers officiating. This required two different ceremonies which is still the practice today and comprised the events that I observed.

5.7.2 Ethnographic observations of funerals

Table 5.7 shows that of the 49 events observed funerals and burials formed the largest numbers. For many Jamaicans this is the primary death ritual as was indicated in replies to the question 'what are the most important customs and practices to be observed when someone dies?' For some interviewees the funeral was such a 'given' that they did not initially mention it. When I asked one interviewee if funerals were important, he replied 'Oh yes. That goes without saying'. The format of the funeral services observed which were not followed by burials because cremation was the disposal method chosen by the family, were consistent with those where burial followed the services.

Table 5.7 Types of events observed

Event	UK	Jamaica	Total
Grave digging	-	1	1
Nine-night	6	1	7
Funerals	12	4	16
Burials	7	4	11
Cremations	1	1	2
Receptions/Repasses	9	2	11
Grave party	1	-	1
Total	**32**	**14**	**49**

I had hoped to observe funerals from different types of deaths including those from natural causes, suicides and unlawful killings to see whether there were differences in practice. Given the unenviable title of 'murder capital of the world' that Jamaica

held some years ago (BBC, 2006), and its current challenges with unlawful killings (Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2022) I had particularly hoped to be able to observe some events related to this type of death. However, the COVID-19 restrictions that were imposed in Jamaica on 10th March 2020, many of which were still in force when I left at the end of July 2020, resulted in fewer deaths overall in the population, particularly murders, and there were no further opportunities to attend death-related events after the 10th March 2020. This accounts for the low number of observations in Jamaica compared to the UK. The funerals of the two deaths by suicides and one unlawful killing I observed were all males, as shown in Table 5.8 which is consistent with national and international figures that greater numbers of men are represented in these categories (Our World in Data, 2019).

Table 5.8: Causes of death

Cause of death	UK	Jamaica
Natural causes	10	3
Suicide	1	1
Unlawful killing	1	-

Within Jamaican culture, and particularly Jamaican Christian culture, suicide is perceived as a disgrace, a ‘sin’ but this view also has echoes in some African cultures as noted by Mbiti (1970 p158), ‘Children, unmarried people, those who die through suicide…, may not be given the same or full burial rites.’ Historically death by suicide in Jamaica was a stigma for the deceased and his or her family. Previously, in both the UK and Jamaica such a person would be denied a Christian funeral or burial on sacred ground. Indeed, sometimes they would not even be afforded the funeral ritual and the family would quietly bury the body in an unmarked grave either on family land or in a cemetery. In some African cultures those deceased by suicide are also not afforded the full funeral ritual. However, in cases of death by unlawful killing

in Jamaica and in the UK diaspora, the person is celebrated, the untimely death bemoaned and justice, and sometimes vengeance is sought. I was interested to observe how the rituals would be applied in each of the two cases of death by suicide that I was able to attend, and that of the unlawful killing, which was not as a result of murder but the result of a hit-and-run accident.

As table 5.8 shows, death by suicide was observed in both the UK and Jamaica, and ironically, despite the high rate of murders in Jamaica, the one unlawful killing was in the UK. The death by suicide in the UK was the largest funeral I observed which was attended by over 700 in a Pentecostal church. The funeral of the seventy-six-year-old gentleman was held with full military honours, and was very much a celebration of his life and achievements. This was a significant change to the previously held belief that suicide deaths should not be afforded a Christian funeral. The burial was similarly conducted with military aspects added to the Jamaican graveside ritual. The numbers at his nine-night necessitated an additional room being opened in the night club where it was held. It would seem that the man's standing within the community had overridden the stigma of his death. It is also the case that views on suicides are changing in the UK among the Jamaican diaspora, as it was recognised that the gentleman had, for some time, faced challenges with his mental health. I noted, however, that while it is customary to indicate the cause of death in the eulogy at the funeral, this was omitted despite widespread reporting in the local media that he had jumped in front of a moving train. Instead, references were made to his mental health struggles, indicating that an element of stigma still persists.

The death by suicide funeral in Jamaica was that of a twenty-nine-year-old Catholic young man whose body had already been cremated and his ashes brought to the funeral service. A large photograph of the deceased was placed at the front of the

church while the funeral mass was conducted. Despite the service's attempt to celebrate his life, the mood in the church was very sombre. The young man left behind a wife and two children aged four and six years. His eulogy also omitted the cause of death, instead, both the eulogy and the tributes focused on his achievements and the lost potential of a brilliant mind. There were approximately 100 people at the funeral service. It was brought to my attention that this was the second funeral service for the young man as his wife and his parents were in dispute and each held a separate service for him. The rift, I was told, related to the nature of his death and the blame that was being apportioned by each side.

The death by unlawful killing in the UK was of a Rastafari gentleman aged 60. The rituals surrounding his death were attended by many people. His was the nine-night that took place in the open air and which adhered most closely to the practices described by the older interviewees. His funeral was a reflection of the significant changes in Rastafari funeral practices. Prior to the 1980s Rastafari did not conduct funerals due to the belief that a true Rastafari reincarnated instantly at the point of death, as discussed in chapter three. Rastafari were therefore being buried by Christian ministers, having lived all their lives as Rastafari. Following protest in the UK, changes in practice were effected resulting in Rastafari embracing the full range of Jamaican public death rituals.

The funeral, which was conducted during the COVID-19 restrictions was streamed live on the Zoom platform. It was held in a large entertainment venue, attended by the maximum number permitted by the COVID-19 restrictions, but watched by many more. The Rastafari and Jamaican flag colours of red, green, black and gold, symbolisms not just of Rastafari but of Jamaican identity, were evident throughout, as were the white funeral colours of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to which some

Rastafari are affiliated. The coffin was escorted into the venue past a line of drummers playing various types of African drums, and the funeral service contained many African symbols such as ankhs, Nyabinghi walking sticks, African headwraps and fabrics. Many of the features of a Christian funeral service were evident, but while there were tributes, a Bible reading, a eulogy, and a sermon, there were no hymns. Music was provided by drums and recordings of reggae songs.

The major thing of note is that followers of the Rastafari religion are now being afforded the full range of Jamaican death rituals. The influences these ceremonies are exerting on the wider Christian and secular communities are discussed in Chapter 6 which addresses the causes of changes to Jamaican death rituals and Chapter 7 which considers the creation of new rituals.

The other observations made related to the processes described by the older interviewees and those detailed in the observation schedule. These are transporting the coffin, floral tributes, length and content of the funeral service, dress code and the use of music and drums, which are all practices interviewees had said were changing in a concerning way. These are summarised in table 5.9. The figures relate to the number of events where the processes were observed. The significance of these changes is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Table 5.9 Funeral observations

Transport of coffin	Hearse 9	Horse and carriage 4	Not Known 3		
Type of coffin	Standard 10	Custom 6			
Floral tributes	Standard 9	Custom 4	Not known 3		
Coffin into venue	Professional pallbearers 2	Family/friends pallbearers 5	Trolley 5	Not known 4	-
Length of service	30 mins or less 2	30-60 mins 4	1-2 hours 7	More than 2 hours 3	-
Content of service	Tributes 16	Eulogy 16	Sermon 12	Open coffin 9	-
Dress colours	Black 12	Purple 3	White 6	Bright 8	Rasta colours 2
Use of choir	3	-	-	-	-
Use of African drums	3	-	-	-	-
Use of other instruments	4	-	-	-	-
Use of bands	3	-	-	-	-

There is no comparison to be made with funerals prior to 1950 as they were not performed as rituals separate to burials as discussed earlier.

5.7.3 Ethnographic observations of burials

Eleven burials were observed, seven in the UK and four in Jamaica. Five of these were live streamed observations, two in Jamaica and three in the UK. Observations were made of how the casket was transported to the cemetery, and from the vehicle to grave. Also, the length of graveside service, use of hymns/songs, a choir, drums or other instruments, how the grave was filled in and by whom, and whether the grave was entombed as shown in Table 5.10. These are all issues that had been the subject of complaint among those voicing dissent about the changes to the death ritual of burial.

Table 5.10 Burial observations

Coffin to cemetery	Hearse 5	Horse and Cart 2	Not known 4	
Coffin to grave	Professional 1	Family/friends 6	4	
Length of service	Less than 30 mins 2	30-60 mins 5	1-2 hours	More than 2 hours
Graveside hymns	Yes 8			
Use of music	African drums 2	Other instruments 1	Recorded music 1	
Filling in the grave	Family/friends 5	Officials 3	Not known 3	
Entombment	Yes 4	No 7		

The two burials observed in Jamaica were the ones that varied most from those described by the older interviewees, and where the greatest number of changes have

taken place. It will be helpful to first look at the similarities before addressing the changes.

Although the caskets were brought to the graveside by hearses, and not on the shoulders of pallbearers from the deceased's house, they were still carried by male family and friends from the hearse to the grave. The other thing that remained consistent with the older interviewees' account of burials was the singing at the graveside after the caskets were inserted into the grave and before the committal pronouncements by the minister. The differences were the use of vaults and sepulchres.

At one of the burials in Jamaica the grave was a sepulchre into which the casket was inserted by those carrying it without the need to be lowered into the grave as shown in Fig.5.9 with Fig. 5.10 showing the sealed sepulchre with two floral tributes.

Fig 5.9 A casket being inserted into a sepulchre. Source: Researcher's image.

Floral tributes were few in comparison to the UK. The services lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Fig 5.10 Sealed sepulchre with two floral tributes. Source: Researcher's image

The second burial was a vault grave into which the casket was lowered by cemetery workers and also sealed by them. The image below in Fig 5.11 is that of a decorated vault into which the casket has been lowered prior to being sealed.

Fig 5.11 Casket lowered into a decorated vault. Source: Researcher's image.

The burial services in the UK were much longer affairs, and, in common with Jamaica, the caskets were taken to the cemeteries in the same vehicle that brought them to the funeral venues, and similarly family and friends brought the casket from the vehicle to the grave. From this point there were significant differences between

the two countries. In the UK the caskets, under the guidance of the funeral director or cemetery workers were lowered into the graves by male family and/or friends, and, following the committal pronouncements, the graves were filled in by male, and occasionally, female family and friends using spades and shovels as shown in Fig 5.12.

Fig 5.12 Males filling in the grave in the UK. Source: Researcher's image.

They were kept motivated by singing from the graveside attendees, sometimes accompanied by instruments such as tambourines and shakers and sometimes by African drums, as shown in Fig 5.13, and on one occasion, by all of the instruments.

Fig 5.13. Drumming at the graveside in the UK. Source: Researcher's image.

When the grave was filled and mounded the family, both males and females dressed it with the floral arrangements as shown in Fig 5.14, a practice which some believe is symbolic of a blanket covering the deceased who is sleeping. This was sometimes carried out under the guidance of the funeral director who incorporated pauses for photographic and videographic recordings more consistent with weddings, christenings and other social and celebratory occasions.

Fig 5.14 Members of the family dress the grave with flowers. Source: Researcher's image

At four funerals doves were released before the final prayer by the officiating minister, Fig 5.15. At one burial inflatable doves and balloons were released instead of live doves.

Fig 5.15 Doves in a basket waiting to be released. Source: Researcher's image.

Typically, these more elaborate services lasted an hour, and it was at these that there were sometimes calls for the attendees to cease from loud socialising until the ritual was completed. Some attendees brought rum and plastic cups and offered the drink to others, some simply used the rum for their own purposes. On two occasions a libation of rum was poured at the end of the service onto the flowers on the grave, and on two occasions incense and candles were lit and placed on the grave. The reasons for these differences between past and current practices in both locations, and between Jamaica and the UK diaspora are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.8 The reception or repass

The reception is a ritual similar to the British wake (Senior, 2003 p505) and generally involves the family providing food and drink for those who attended the funeral and/or burial. Repass is a term used in Jamaica to describe this event and is thought to have been imported from the United States.

5.8.1 The reception as remembered by the older interviewees

The meal after the burial ritual was originally a small affair according to the older interviewees. It provided an opportunity to unwind after the ordeal of the previous two days of intense activities and was a way to release the pent-up emotions leading up to the burial. The burial had been teamwork, most of the people in the villages or districts would have been involved in some way, whether with digging the grave, making the coffin, sewing the shroud, dressing the corpse, preparing food or

supporting the family in other ways. The meal after the burial was an opportunity to breathe out, relax and look forward to the celebrations of the nine-night.

It was for these purposes that attendees at the burial went to the deceased's family house where food was served, rum drunk, music played and, depending on the quantity of rum drunk, dancing ensued. The food was similar in nature to the nine-night fare described in table 5.6. This event provided another opportunity to reminisce about the deceased, and to comment on how smoothly or otherwise the burial had been carried out. Post burial support was offered to the grieving family in practical and emotional ways.

5.8.2 Ethnographic observations of receptions and repasses

The current post burial meal varied widely in size and extravagance. The table below is a summary of the receptions and repasses observed with particular focus on whether the event was accessible to all who attended the funeral and/or burial, where the events were held, whether there were further speeches or tributes, the food served, music played and the duration of the events as outlined in Table 5.11. These were all areas where changes had been complained about prior to the research.

Table 5.11: Reception/Repass observation

Open to all	Yes 9	No 0
Venue	Hired Venue 8	Church garden 1
Tributes/speeches	Yes 2	No 7
Food	Yes* 9	No 0
Music/party	Yes 7	No 2
Duration	30-60 mins 2	4+ hours 7
Other	Dominoes** 1	

*See Table 5.6 For type of food

** The deceased had created and managed a very successful dominoes team.

These events, along with the burial, represent the greatest differences observed in the way they are carried out in Jamaica and in the UK diaspora. I attended two repasses in Jamaica. The first was held in the church garden where the funeral had been conducted, and the second in a field under a gazebo about 15 minutes' drive from the church. Both were very simple affairs compared to the ones in the UK. There was no music and they were scheduled to last approximately 45 minutes. The meals, which arrived in catering vans, were pre-packed in containers. (See Table 5.6: Food served at events). The first offered fish and rice-and-peas or chicken and rice-and-peas, both with vegetables. The other offered mannish water, curry goat and rice-and-peas and chicken and rice-and-peas, both with vegetables. Juice or water

was offered, there were no alcoholic beverages available. Attendees ate, reminisced and left, in both cases in less than an hour.

The larger receptions in the UK were similar to weddings, and indeed it could be argued that for some Jamaicans they are a substitute for the weddings the deceased did not have. Some receptions held in 500 capacity venues were laid out in the style of weddings, one even had a top table with buffet and music. At four of the larger venues the tables and chairs were decorated in the funeral colour theme, which was also reflected in the table decorations and the lighting scheme. See Fig 5.16. At one there were framed photographs of the deceased on each table. At another small gifts for the attendees were placed on the tables in boxes decorated with the deceased's photograph. These are all consistent with modern Jamaican weddings.

Some of these larger events lasted for up to eight hours with music, dancing and partying, sometimes into the early hours of the morning. One of the smaller events, the reception for the funeral with 25 attendees, lasted for eight hours. There are several reasons for these extended events. For some Jamaicans, particularly those over 60 years of age, funerals are social events, an opportunity to meet up with old friends, to have a free meal and to dance the night away.

People travel great distances to attend funerals and often stay overnight in the city in which the funeral is taking place, the reception is treated as a social event.

People who have not attended either the funeral or burial are able to attend the reception as they may have been working during the times of the other events, and for them, as well as being a social event, it enables them to show their support for the family.

Fig 5.16 Large funeral reception in the UK decorated in the colours of the Jamaican flag. Source: Researcher's image.

Many people I spoke to at these events felt that the receptions were a major contributor to the rising cost of death ritual, and that greater affluence among some sectors of the communities were enabling these grand events. Such was the focus on celebrating the life of the deceased that at one reception there was a large celebration cake.

Two of the receptions encouraged further speeches and tributes, as, despite a funeral service of two hours, it was felt many people had not had an opportunity to pay a public tribute. This emphasis on public tributes contributes to the increasing length of funeral services. A Catholic minister interviewed cited tributes as the major

difference between the length of the Catholic funeral mass of approximately one hour, where only three tributes are permitted, and the five-hour long ones in the Pentecostal churches where greater numbers of tributes are allowed. This was suggested as a cause for the disruption of drinking and smoking at the burial ritual due to the length of time spent sitting still and attentive at the funeral.

5.9 Memorial Ritual

Memorial rituals, held sometime after the disposal of the corpse, are not in abundance in Jamaica.

5.9.1 Memorial rituals as remembered by the older interviewees

There were only two memorial rituals described by the older interviewees, the erection of headstones and ‘tombing’ in the Kumina community. Erecting the tombstone was carried out when the earth above the grave had settled. There was no specific timescale as in some African groups such as the Nso people of Cameroon of which I am an inaugurated member, as discussed in Chapter 1, where large formal rituals are held at twelve months, five years, and 10-year intervals after the initial funeral. In Jamaica the timescale was usually determined by affordability. A small number of family members attended the ritual at the grave which consisted of a mason erecting the headstone followed by a family meal.

In Jamaica, among the Kumina group ‘the “tombing” one year after the death is a significant rite’ (Senior, 2003 p151) with singing, dancing, feasting, drumming and spirit possession. The one interviewee from the Kumina community seemed reluctant

to discuss their death rituals in detail but confirmed that ‘Kumina have funerals, and them have nine-nights and some other things’ (Male aged 64 Jamaica). He did not explain the ‘other things’ but did invite me to attend a Kumina event. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was, however, able to observe a memorial ritual in the UK which took place eight months after the burial.

5.9.2 Ethnographic observation of memorial ritual

The memorial event I attended has no place in Jamaican tradition and is a newly created ritual. It was in the form of a graveside party held for a 36-year-old woman on the anniversary of her birthday. The family, who knew of my research invited me to attend. There were approximately forty members of the family, including the woman’s five children, the youngest being just a year old. A small number of close friends had also been invited. Her parents and siblings had organised the event as a way of keeping her memory alive, especially for her children.

Snacks, soft drinks and alcohol, particularly the deceased’s favourite drink was provided, and music was played from a portable device as shown in Fig.5.17.

After greetings, fresh flowers were laid on the grave, and a short service was conducted, officiated by the father. Prayers were said followed by speeches about coping strategies for dealing with the loss, especially of her wit and humour. Blessings for the continued health and well-being of her children were pronounced before the family sang ‘happy birthday’ to the deceased and toasted her continued rest in peace. There were tears, there were hugs, there were jokes about the deceased. The event lasted 90 minutes before attendees dispersed, many to attend

a venue where food and drink were organised. The family plan for this to become an annual event.

Fig 5.17 Family attending a memorial grave party. Source: Researcher's image

This event is consistent with the creation of new rituals, which in time become 'traditional' (Anderson, 1983, 2016; Smith, 1991). Given the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic it is possible that more rituals are being created in both Jamaica and the UK. Further studies to specifically evaluate the effect of the pandemic on Jamaican death rituals would be helpful as they were severely impacted by the restrictions. The effects of these restrictions, and the responses of the Jamaican communities in both Jamaica and in the UK are discussed in Chapter 6.

These new rituals are being created from the symbols of the rituals that are no longer widely practised as well as those that are still extant, the meanings of which are discussed in the following section.

5.10 The symbolic meaning of Jamaican rituals

This section is concerned with the symbols that are intrinsic to Jamaican death rituals. Analysis of the symbols within rituals is important for three reasons. Firstly, symbols are the building blocks of which rituals are made and can be in the form of objects or defined actions. Secondly, an understanding of the symbols within the rituals enables a more comprehensive interpretation of the meanings of the rituals. Thirdly, symbols are often used as devices for creating new rituals or making adjustments to existing ones.

> The symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of the ritual behaviour; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context' (Turner, 1967 p19)

He argues that it is not the ritual that is solid and permanent but the symbols and they can be reconfigured in other ways to create new rituals. Symbols exist as tangible artefacts and in symbolic actions as described in tables 5.12, 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15. It was not possible in this study whose main focus is on the experience of changes to the rituals as crisis of heritage and national identity to carry out a detailed analysis of all the symbols used in all the rituals. Tables 5.12 and 5.13 categorises the rituals into 'protective' rituals, that is, rituals that symbolises protection from the spirit of the deceased and rituals that symbolises protection of the spirit of the deceased. While they are presented here, they do not form part of the major discussion for two reasons. 1) they were not the rituals perceived to be at risk of extinction and 2) it was not possible to observe the rituals as they are generally

carried out privately and I could not find corroborative evidence of their practise. Further study of these protective rituals would be useful to assess their prevalence and is one of the recommendations for further research discussed in Chapter 8. A discussion of the tables follows Table 5.15.

Table 5.12 Ritual for general protection from the deceased

Rituals designed for protection from the spirit of the deceased
Putting coins on the eyes of the deceased. This is so the duppy will not be able to see where it is going as the weight of the coins will hold the eyelids closed. This may well have begun as a purely practical way of keeping the eyelids closed prior to the onset of rigor mortis
Throwing out from the house all the water in containers. A belief that the spirit of the deceased can hide in water and molest the inhabitants of the house. This ritual has resonance with the ritual requiring the water used to wash the body to be disposed of at a crossroad.
Burning all the bedclothes that the person died on. This is for hygiene reasons as well as the belief that if someone else should sleep on the bedding the same fate would befall them. A ritual of contagion.
Turning all the photos around. This ritual is based on the belief that if the spirit cannot see photos of the bereaved it will believe it is in the wrong house and go elsewhere.
Covering the mirrors in the house. There are a number of explanations for this ritual. The first is that the time of death in a household is not an appropriate time for vanity. The second, which seems to originate from the Jewish traditions of Shiva and was probably brought to Jamaican via the early Jewish settlers is that spirits may attach themselves to the reflection in the mirror and not leave the house.
Rearranging the furniture in the house. If the spirit returns to the house, it will not recognise the setting and will not stay, believing it is in the wrong house.
Wearing items of clothing inside out. This is seen as a protective measure from molestation from the spirit of the deceased.
Placing a tape measure over the door. This ritual is designed to stop the deceased’s spirit crossing into the room to harm its inhabitants. No-one was able to explain the symbolism of the tape measure.
Placing a left foot shoe at a closed door. The duppy will not cross the shoe to come into the room and harm the people inside.
‘Turning him out’ All belongings of the deceased put outside the house on the 9th day after death, an indication to the spirit of the deceased that it no longer lives there.
Sewing up all pockets in men’s suits. This is to prevent the duppy from secretly taking anything into the afterlife with which to later harm the living.
Cutting out pockets of men’s trousers. This is similar to sewing up the pockets, it is to prevent the duppy from secretly taking anything into the afterlife with which to harm the living.

Using white rum to wash the faces of the grave diggers, and those preparing the body for burial. White rum is considered a protective spirit.

Taking the body feet first out of the house. The intention of this ritual is to ensure the spirit of the deceased is looking forward as it leaves the house, as allowing it to look back would encourage it to return.

Spinning the coffin around on the way to the funeral. This ritual is designed to confuse the spirit of the deceased so it will not be able to find its way back to the house.

Walking backward from the funeral. This is so the spirit of the deceased will not follow attendees home. The spirit is fooled into thinking the person is walking forward and not attempt to follow them.

Table 5.13 Rituals for specific protection from the deceased

Rituals for specific protection of children/women/men from the spirit of the deceased
Tying red ribbon on children. Red, being a protective colour will keep duppies from molesting children. **Men wearing black underwear after their partner's death**. This is to stop the deceased partner's duppy from trying to have intercourse with him. **Hanging tape measure above a baby's crib or cot.** To prevent spirits from coming back to molest babies. **Children sleeping with the deceased.** Children are placed in the bed of the deceased to gain their protection, and/or to imbibe the desirable qualities of the deceased. **'Keeping the bed front' A family member of the opposite sex sleeps in the same bed as the widow(er) until the burial.** This is to indicate to the spirit of the deceased that there is no space in the bed for him/her anymore**.** **Women wearing red panties after their partner's death.** Red is a protective colour and red panties will dissuade the woman's deceased partner's spirit from attempting to have intercourse with her. **Women wearing tape measure around their waist when their partner dies**. To stop the deceased partner trying to have intercourse with them. **Women wearing their panties inside out after the death of their partner.** This is to deter the deceased spouse from attempting to have intercourse with the woman. **Women putting piece of vagina hair in partner's hand/in the coffin**. This is to keep the deceased partner satisfied so that he does not return to sexually molest her. **Women not attending funerals during pregnancy.** This is because the deceased's spirit could harm the unborn child. **Tearing a white handkerchief in half and burying one half with a spouse while retaining the other**, to indicate a spiritual connection with the deceased. **Passing children over a coffin.** Children, mainly girls, are passed over the coffin of male relatives, particularly fathers for two reasons. The first is to encourage the spirit to stay in the coffin and not return to molest the young girls. The second is to ensure that no one (particularly obeah practitioners as discussed in chapter three) can capture the spirit and put it to nefarious work.

Table 5.14 Rituals to equip the spirit for the afterlife

Rituals to equip the dead for the afterlife
Disposing of the water used to wash the body at a crossroad. The cross roads have special significance in some African countries such as Cameroon. They are seen as places where the spirits of the deceased make decisions and the most appropriate place to seek their help. Disposing of the water used to wash the body of a deceased person at a crossroad ensures that the bereaved will always know where they are. **Placing beans in the pockets of the deceased before burial**. Beans are given to the deceased to ensure that they have means of growing food in the spirit world. **Placing items in the coffin of the deceased.** A range of items are placed in coffins before burial, from personal items such as jewellery and amulets, to items of trade such as screwdrivers and hammers. Some relatives also include the Bible or a prayer book, money to ensure the deceased is provided for in the afterlife, and weapons such as knives and guns for the duppies to protect themselves, to take revenge for their death, or to avenge family members who are being unfairly treated. **Sprinkling white rum on the grave.** This ritual has two meanings. Firstly, it is an appeal to the earth spirits to accommodate the newest arrival, and secondly, it is offering the spirit a last drink before everyone walks away, particularly if the deceased liked rum.

Table 5.15 Rituals to help with the grieving process

Rituals to appease the living, ease conscience and help with grieving
Wrapping the body in white sheet after removing clothes. A practice for when the death happens at home, or when the body is brought back to the home. In some African countries white is the colour of mourning and it is likely this was brought by the Africans who were enslaved in Jamaica. This could be a practice that originates there. **Helping family with cash or kind with funeral expenses.** This is the basis of the community funeral where the whole community contributes to the disposal of the deceased in a proper and fitting manner. **Grave digging.** Friends, family and members of the community prepare the grave. The digging begins with a libation of white rum to seek permission from the spirits of the earth to begin digging. The digging will usually begin early, between 6 – 6.30 a.m. so that the bulk of the digging will be completed before the heat of the midday sun. Rum will be drunk throughout, and food will be provided by the family (or other community members) for those carrying out the digging, and sometimes those in attendance. There will often be singing, and more recently recorded music. A detailed description of a grave digging ceremony is included in section 5.4.2. **Vault building.** After the hole for the grave is dug a mason builds a vault, or more recently a sepulchre, to house the coffin or casket on the day of the burial. This is a relatively new ritual, an extension of the grave digging ceremony. **Nine-night.** A ritual of African origin designed to mark the end of the grieving period and return to normal life. It is the point at which the deceased spirit joins the world of the dead. **Dancing around a fire at nine nights while drinking rum (Kumina)** **40 nights dancing** – This is a Kumina practice to assist the deceased to a safe passage to the ancestral home, practised mainly in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Thomas and St. Mary. **Gerreh dancing** is a practice found mainly in the Hanover and Westmoreland parishes of Jamaica. Community members go to the deceased's house to 'jump Gerreh' which forms part of the nine-night ritual. Songs are sung with makeshift instruments such as graters, hollow bamboo, pot lids and sticks to 'play' them. Games are played, usually in rings, a popular one being 'go down a Manuel Road' (see also chapter 3, and Senior 2003). Nowadays Gerreh dancers can be hired to perform at nine nights. An example of this form of dance can be seen on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcOgi1e-ihs The moves of the dancers are consistent with many of the dances performed by dancers in West Africa. **Dikimini – 2-8 nights of singing, dancing, and spirit possession**, practiced mainly in Clarendon and St. Mary parishes. **Candle light vigil 9 days after the death.** Candles are lit on the 9th night after death. In some cases the path to the deceased's house is lined with candles. It is possible for anyone in the community to hold a candle light vigil for the deceased, and it need not be at the deceased's house. Sometimes there are tributes, sometimes music, sometimes food. This appears to be a fairly recent ritual imported from North America. **Bringing the coffin to the house the night before the funeral**, and having it open for viewing of the body. This is so that family and friends can pay their last respects to the deceased in his or her own home. In some cases, domino games are played in the room housing the coffin, and there is much rum drinking, especially if the deceased was a lover of rum. In other cases, the coffin is kept in a separate room where family and friends can say quiet goodbyes.

Coffin feet first into and out of the church. This involves **turning the coffin around in the church** to allow the feet to always go first as the deceased walks towards Christ.

Opening the coffin to view the body at funerals. This ritual serves a variety of purposes. Firstly, it provides an opportunity for family and friends to have a last look at the deceased, to maybe give them a kiss, stroke their hand or forehead, or to say some last word. Secondly, due to the custom of Jamaicans having many nicknames, it is a way to confirm the identity of the deceased. Lastly, it is an opportunity to show the deceased in his or her Sunday best. This is an African based custom which is still very prevalent in Jamaica, and, while it is still evident in the diaspora, less so.

Wearing black at funerals. Black is the European colour of mourning, and was adopted by the Christian slaves as part of their conversion to Christianity.

Wearing purple at a funeral. This comes from Catholicism. It was worn during Advent and Lent to represent the loss and mourning for Jesus' death and, along with white and black, may also be used for funeral masses.

Wearing white at a funeral. White symbolises purity and rebirth and is worn by Rastafari to symbolise instantaneous reincarnation.

Wearing black and white at funerals. This could be viewed as a mixture of European Christianity and African Orthodox Christianity where white is the funeral colour.

Family and friends fill in the grave after a burial. This is a ritual that has continued since the days of slavery among the descendants of Africans in Jamaica and among its diasporas. It is seen as an honour to carry out this last act for the deceased, and is a matter of distress for the family if there are insufficient people, usually men, to do this and the help of the cemetery staff have to be enlisted.

Reception or Repass. The latter is the North American term for the event where food and drink are served after the burial or the church service if the body has been, or is going to be cremated. In the UK this is called a reception or wake.

The rituals described in the tables 5.12, 5.13 and 5.14 above demonstrate strong beliefs in the afterlife and the active involvement on the deceased in the life of the bereaved. They also demonstrate the belief that children are sensitive to the spirit of the deceased as is evidenced by the number of rituals involving babies and children. The deceased are often remembered by naming children after them (Mbiti, 1981 p125). It is the changing nature of these beliefs, as discussed in Chapter 6, that are in part responsible for the changes in the rituals. The rituals in Table 5.15 are predominantly concerned with the grieving process and with presenting the deceased and his or her family in the most advantageous religious and socioeconomic light.

It has not been possible in a study of this size to conduct a complete analysis of the symbolic representation of all the artefacts within the rituals as mentioned above. As Turner (1967) demonstrated, this requires extensive observation of all aspects of a ritual on multiple levels as he did in his symbolic analysis of practices used by the Ndembu people of Southern Africa. Richards (2021) recently carried out in-depth analysis of the nine-night in relation to its continued significance within Pentecostal Christianity in the UK. His findings that a lack of understanding of the ritual's symbolic meaning is contributing to its demise among some Jamaicans is consistent with the findings from this study, further underscoring the importance of the transmission of the symbolic meaning of the rituals. However, while there is some decline in the use of the ritual among some groups, it is still widely practised among others as discussed in Chapter 7. Further studies into the symbolic artefacts of the rituals would extend the understanding of their representation within the rituals, in addition to the symbolic actions discussed here.

5.11 Conclusion

The chapter aimed to determine the nature and extent of the changes to the death rituals by comparing practices as remembered by the older interviewees prior to the refrigeration of corpses with current practices. Semi-structured interviews allowed for oral history to be used with the older interviewees to describe the rituals as they experienced them. The extended time between death and disposal of the body, which can sometimes be as long as eight weeks, is a condition that some interviewees find distressing. Further research should be carried out to determine the extent of psychological distress to the bereaved of this extended time. The disruption

caused to the sequencing of the rituals is resulting in confusion of the timing of the nine-night and, as a consequence, its meaning.

The data also shows that public rituals are now afforded to Jamaicans who died by suicide indicating changing views and greater acceptance of the role of mental health challenges in such deaths. They are now being given the full range of rituals where they were previously denied.

In categorising the rituals, the data indicates that they are syncretisms of African and Christian religions and many are symbolic of belief in the active involvement of the deceased in the lives of the bereaved. Others reflect belief in a Christian heaven and an afterlife with God.

Given the concerns relating to the lack of community response to death (Williams 2015), the research found that the public rituals of nine-night, funeral, burial and reception/repass continue to provide social structure and cohesion to Jamaican communities in both locations, and that families feel supported psychologically by the rituals. However, the anxieties regarding the escalating cost of the rituals are confirmed as they continue to be of ongoing concern for many individuals.

The following chapter outlines a more extensive range of influences causing and arising from the changes to the death rituals.

CHAPTER 6

CAUSES, PROCESSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF RITUAL TRANSFORMATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second and third research questions in terms of the causes of the changes to the rituals and the consequences of the transformations in both locations. It uses information from the interviews in both countries, analysis of the ethnographic observation of ritual events as detailed in Chapter 5, vicarious observations on the internet, and recordings that family members were willing to share. It also makes use of discussions with individuals who were not official interviewees, radio and television programmes, newspaper articles in both countries, and draws on other literature on causes of ritual transformation.

The influences of the changes and the processes by which they are affected are presented under seven separate headings but with inevitable overlap given the interrelatedness of the issues. The headings are acculturation, failure to teach the rituals to young people, increased affluence, medicalisation of death and the increasing influence of funeral directors, technology, changing values, and changing religious beliefs including the influence of Rastafari.

The modifications to, and creation of new rituals are detailed in Chapter 5. However, for ease of reference the components of the rituals undergoing the greatest transformation are summarised in Table 6.1. It is clear from the table that the largest number of changes are perceived to be occurring in the ritual of nine-night, with

concerns about specific aspects of the funeral service and burial also noted. Below the table are a number of changes noted by single interviewees. They are included in the analysis as they were also mentioned by others in general discussion in both the UK and Jamaica. For example, *'No help with food provided to families anymore'* was mentioned in five different conversations, and was also one of the issues highlighted in Williams' (2015) article.

Table 6.1 Changes to the rituals as reported by the interviewees

Changes	UK	Jamaica	Total
Nine-night	7	8	15
Funeral colours and styles	8	4	12
More expensive funerals	5	2	7
More cremations	2	5	7
No changes observed	3	3	6
More vaults, not graves	-	4	4
Increased time for disposal	1	3	4
Body not brought to house to view	3	-	3
Types of food at events	1	2	3
Rastafari now have funerals	1	2	3
Vendors at death events	-	3	3
Disposal of the body no longer a community affair	-	2	2
Noisy carriages	-	2	2
Photos on coffin/casket, montage of pics in programmes, video recording	2	-	2
Increased length of service	1	1	2
No collection for grave diggers	2	-	2
Increasing demand for repass	-	2	2

There were other changes observed by single individuals. These included:
Families no longer prepare and dress the body (UK)
No help with food provided to families any more (JA)
Grave digging is now an 'event' (JA)
Vaults are only being dug 4 feet deep to save on costs (JA)
Some families now have a vigil at the funeral home (JA)
Funerals nowadays are about worshipping the dead (JA)
Party atmosphere at funerals (UK)
No singing at graveside (UK)
Fewer people filling in the grave (UK) Health and safety is a reason
People smoking ganja [marijuana] and drinking at the graveside during the service (UK)
Fewer people at funerals due to COVID-19 (JA)

In addition to identifying the specific changes to the rituals, interviewees were asked to suggest reasons for the changes. Their responses are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Main causes of the changes as reported by the interviewees

Causes of the changes	UK	Jamaica	Total
Acculturation/outside influences (UK and US) mix of religions	9	4	13
Young people not being taught the rituals	6	5	11
Increased affluence	4	4	8
Technology	2	-	2

In addition to the factors in Table 6.2 which were identified by the interviewees, the ethnographic observations of the nine-nights, funerals, burials and receptions, discussions with members of the Jamaican communities in both locations, and the literature, particularly Mitford (1963; 1978) Chevannes (1994) Senior (2003) Bolus and Belk (2003) and Cross (2018), identified three further major influencers of the modification and transformation of the rituals. These are:

- Medicalisation of death and the influence of funeral directors
- Changing values
- Changing religious belief including the influence of Rastafari

In all cases the causes of the changes were acknowledged as a process rather than a single event, with some interviewees noting that the changes have been occurring over a period of years or even decades. The most significant influencer of the changes was attributed to practices in the United States and the United Kingdom, followed by the rituals not being taught to young people. These outside influences, identified as acculturation by three of the interviewees is essentially an overarching process within which the other processes sit, and has been an important part of

Jamaican heritage and identity as a double diaspora nation as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

6.2 Acculturation

Acculturation is a process usually applied to the changes that occur when people adjust to the mainstream culture of a plural society. Historically the term was applied to changes in culture imposed as a result of political or military conquest such as occurred during the colonisation activities of European countries in Africa and the Caribbean whose language, religion, legal systems and other cultural practices were imposed on the indigenous peoples (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Nowadays it is used to describe 'those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups' (Sam and Berry, 2010 p473**).** Jamaicans living in Jamaica and those who have become immigrants in countries such as Canada, the United States and European countries such as the UK, are acculturated by way of the old and new definitions.

Sam and Berry (2010) proposed four acculturation patterns, namely assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation. Assimilation they described as a willingness to adapt to the host culture at the expense of the loss of one's own cultural heritage and identity. Separation is the preference for retaining one's own cultural heritage rather than adapt to the new culture. Integration is the willingness to learn aspects of the host culture while retaining aspects of one's cultural heritage and identity. Marginalization they define as an unwillingness to retain one's cultural heritage and identity or to learn the new culture, essentially creating an altogether

new culture. Others (Hall, 1999; Gilroy, 2002) characterise marginalization as an unwillingness by the host society to recognise and accept the cultural heritage and identity of the immigrants, using it as a tool to exclude them from mainstream life and services.

The literature confirms that while Jamaicans in the UK have been subjected to marginalization patterns, they, along with other Caribbean nations, have applied mainly assimilation and integration strategies. As Olusoga (2016 p525) notes

> While the British African population expands, the West Indian population – longer established and more fully integrated – has amalgamated and assimilated more successfully than perhaps any other immigrant group of modern times. The remarkable capacity of West Indian immigrant families to assimilate can be seen in the marriage statistics. Less than half of British West Indians have partners who are also West Indian. According to the Economist, "A child under ten who has a Caribbean parent is more than twice as likely as not to have a white parent".

Gilroy, however, asserts that 'the assimilation of blacks is not a process of acculturation but of cultural syncretism' (Gilroy, 2002 p202), and as discussed in Chapter 3 colour cannot be assimilated, as rejection by members of the host nation including the UK government is still apparent.

The interviewees in this study cited outside influences as the main cause of change to Jamaican death rituals in the UK, and it was also given as a significant influence by the interviewees in Jamaica. In the UK the focus was on being immersed in a different culture, while in Jamaica it was on importing new cultures, predominantly from the USA, but also from the UK and Canada, places with large Jamaican diaspora communities as discussed in Chapter 3.

UK interviewees believe being immersed in different cultural practices plays a major role in the changes to the death rituals.

> Well, firstly I believe that there is… as the generations get more and more English, so the Black people that are being born here they're taking up more of the English culture, and maybe focusing on taking up less of their Caribbean culture, so their attitude towards certain things may be more Westernised, more English centred, and their attention is drawn on other things. They don't see the importance or they might not have been educated in these types of things, and not being around people who can teach them this is what I think… that's maybe the case because I can't really see any other reason' (Male aged 21 UK).

This interviewee was a very articulate student with a depth of knowledge of Jamaican death rituals not often seen in others twice his age. He attributed his knowledge to being taken to death events from childhood.

Others voiced similar views. For example,

> We're in a different environment so we're absorbing a different culture, different generations, so it's inevitable that we'd adopt other, probably European customs as well (Female aged 35 UK).

> A combination of practices in this country being incorporated with Jamaican practices and also other cultures. So, they are being distilled down (Female aged 55 UK).

> Society. New communities. People coming together (Female aged 50 UK).

The Jamaican interviewees were more concerned with importing other cultures. In response to the question on the causes of the changes to the rituals one interviewee simply responded, 'Foreign culture' (Female aged 64 Jamaica). Others were more expansive in their responses:

> The Jamaican motto says 'Out of Many One People', right? And the more we travel, and the more we have persons coming into Jamaica and introducing their way of life, Jamaican have a way of adopting everything that everybody comes with or what they go and see. So, some things are changing (Female aged 48 Jamaica).

> Well, I do believe the North American influence definitely for the tributes, and I think not everyone is having a wake or a nine-night, so you find that everything is falling on the day of the funeral, and you even recognise that persons stay longer for the repass to lengthen the funeral. The repass provide that same level of comfort and socialisation that a nine-night would provide as well, but not everyone is able to attend the nine-night and they may be able to attend the repass after the funeral (Male aged 50 Jamaica).

Acculturation, whether by migration or immigration has been the foundation of Jamaican culture and heritage, first by the syncretism of the cultures of various African countries with Spanish and British cultures during the periods of slavery and colonisation, and later by the influence of the Indians, Chinese, Syrians and other nationalities who have made their home in Jamaica (Mordecai and Mordecai 2001). This, as indicated by the 48-year-old female interviewee above is the source of the Jamaican motto 'Out of Many One People'. As indicated in Chapter 5 changes to the rituals have been witnessed within the lifetime of the interviewees via the process of acculturation. The concerns, particularly by the older interviewees, are not that the rituals should never be changed, but that they are changing at a pace that may lead to their rapid extinction. As Harrison observes, 'Things tend to be classified as "heritage" only in the light of some risk of losing them' (Harrison, 2010 p13). While this fear for the loss of heritage is evident in both locations, it is in the diaspora that such extinction is associated with a loss of national as well as cultural identity.

The acculturation process is a complex one, fostered by high levels of ambivalence about which aspects of the rituals to keep intact and which features to transform or expunge. This was different for each interviewee in line with their values, and the meanings they ascribed to the rituals. There were those who valued the African elements and wished to see them preserved. However, there were others who, while valuing their African heritage felt that only those elements of the rituals that still

enable Jamaica to be regarded as a developed country, such as singing at the graveside, should be retained. They were prepared to forego elements of their African cultural identity to facilitate the image of Jamaica's national identity on the international stage. One interviewee in Jamaica was at pains to point out that he did not consider African practices inferior to European and US practices, but as he felt that others in the wider world did, the pragmatic route to the advancement of the nation was to suppress the African practices. This division between the interviewees was reflected in the conversations within the communities and within the media, predominantly in Jamaica where other African-based cultural forms such as language are being supressed in the name of modernisation and development (Devonish, 2016; Murphy, 2010).

6.3 Failure to teach the rituals to the younger generation

Extinction of heritage, particularly intangible heritage, occurs when the rituals, skills and practices are not transmitted from the older generation to the younger with sufficient regularity as recent studies by Bigambo (2019), Saeji (2019), and Onipede and Philips (2021) found. Where no one in the community sees the need for the rituals their demise will go unnoticed. However, as is the case with the Jamaican death rituals, there may still be members of a community who value the practices and wish to see them maintained. It is for this reason that the UNESCO (2003) *Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage* was established to assist in the preservation of the rituals for those to whom they still mattered. While there may be an assumption by some members of the community that preservation of the rituals is the sole responsibility of the elders, younger Jamaicans are also interested in their preservation. One of the younger interviewees had this to say:

> I think maybe it's just not passing down the information because I think the information is via word of mouth of how they have done things in the past and it not being spoken about, not coming down in the generations and that's probably why I don't know about them because if I hadn't have spoken to my nan [grandmother] I wouldn't have known about the beans in the pockets. (Laughter) I wouldn't have known about that. And you know, I tried to get her to speak at length but she didn't mention any of those other things. Maybe if I spoke to her again, maybe if I speak to her longer, she might say 'oh yeah, we used to do that. Just the passing down of information, not being spoken about' (Female aged 33 UK).

This interviewee had accidentally stumbled on one of the private rituals, that of putting beans in the pockets of the deceased, in a conversation with her grandmother. Anxious to learn more she had pressed for knowledge about further rituals without success. The 'those other things' referred to are the other private rituals she had been made aware of in the questionnaire. Post-interview she reported that her grandmother considered the private rituals old fashioned and unnecessary in the UK. Many grandparents have a desire to protect their grandchildren from the 'superstitious nonsense' they no longer believe themselves or wish their grandchildren to believe. The medicalisation and professionalisation of death also provide little opportunity for young people to observe these customs, thus some practices are, of necessity, being taught, rather being learned organically because they are not embedded in everyday practise.

Another interviewee in the UK thought it was attributable to children not being sufficiently knowledgeable about Jamaica per se, so the specific lack of knowledge of death ritual was to be expected.

> In this country it's to do with generations, probably a certain amount of disconnect with Jamaica, my generation, second generation and especially the third generation are not as connected to Jamaica as they could be, which can be a good thing, can be a bad thing, cause I think it's important to have traditions especially around crucial periods of life like birth and death (Male aged 55 UK).

The good and the bad referred to reflect the dialectic tensions between the positive aspects of Jamaican culture and national identity such as sporting excellence, reggae and Rastafari, and the negative aspects such as poverty, violent crime, and homophobia as outlined by Johnson (2019) and Patterson (2019) in Chapter 3, and the tensions between African and European practices. For another interviewee it was simply a matter of parental neglect.

> Parents have not instilled, in their offspring and grandchildren the issue of departing from this world, burial, nine-night, wake, set-up (Male aged 64 UK).

A number of interviewees suggested that some parents of Jamaican heritage born in the UK had fully adopted British cultural values of shielding children from the reality and rituals of death. However, not all parents share the view that children should be shielded from death. One 60-year-old grandmother said she made a point of involving her children, and now her grandchildren in issues of death. She has explained to them the significance of viewing the body in the church and has personally taken her children and grandchildren to view bodies.

> It's the way it's done, if they see you're not afraid, they won't be afraid. You have to explain it to them at a level they can understand (Female aged 60 UK).

One interviewee stated explicitly the view that had been inferred by some, that shame and stigma were attached to the African centred rituals and they were being eroded by a process of gentrification of the mind.

> I think we failed to teach our culture to our younger people, and some of us because we have become, quote/unquote, 'so very well educated' we turn our noses up at these practices. We call them backward and denounce them, so they are not transferred (Female aged 63 Jamaica).

While recognition of the rituals as cultural heritage is similar in both locations, they are of greater importance in terms of national identity in the diaspora. As mentioned earlier Jamaican rituals in the UK are exposed to a dominant host culture and transformations are resulting in rituals more akin to the practices of the host nation. This presents a threat for some Jamaicans who wish to maintain a distinctly Jamaican identity, not just culturally but also nationally. In Jamaica there is less concern for loss of national identity due to the belief that Jamaica's experience of syncretising different cultures to produce something distinctly Jamaican will continue to be expressed in the death rituals. As one interviewee in Jamaica noted:

> The new generation, they grow up and they see this happening and it becomes the norm. But I would imagine that when these set of young people grow up, I would imagine there will be new customs, because we as a people, we always evolve (Male aged 57 Jamaica).

Part of the evolution he references is the increasing affluence of certain sectors of Jamaicans in both locations, which is discussed below.

6.4 Increased affluence

The increase in the cost of funerals was given as the third most noticeable change to Jamaican death rituals. For some interviewees the term 'funerals' incorporated all the public death rituals, from accommodating well-wishers at the home of the deceased to the nine-night, set-up, funeral service, burial and reception/repass. For others 'funeral' referred exclusively to the funeral service, burial and reception/repass. Regardless of the interpretation of the rituals there was agreement that increases in their costs were attributable to actual increase in affluence, the desire to appear affluent, or sheer greed on the part of the funeral directors, especially in Jamaica.

> Greed. I'm sorry, greed… competition and greed in my book. That's it (Female aged 72 Jamaica).

Affluence, or the appearance of it, form part of the complexity of Jamaican culture which is reflected in the current approach to death rituals. Nettleford (1998) chronicles the post-independence uneven distribution of wealth in Jamaica which remains one of the dialectic tensions between wealth and poverty noted by Johnson (2019). Poverty is considered a major factor in the violence in Jamaica as it drives young men into mainly drug-related crime (Harriot and Jones, 2016). Wealth has historically been concentrated in the ruling and middle classes who are the main advocates for adopting and/or maintaining Western cultural practices and promoting Jamaica as a Westernised developed nation, as opposed to a 'backward' African affiliated one. There are, however, exceptions within these groups who have argued for Jamaica's national identity to reflect its ethnic make-up and customs such as Dr Louise Bennett, the folklorist, poet and performer of Jamaican patois, and Nettleford (1998) Devonish, (2016) and Patterson (2019). In addition, as some Jamaicans advance the economic social ladder, they adopt the more Western expressions of the rituals that are evident among their new class, so there is also an element of peer pressure and a wish to fit-in. What Bourdieu calls Habitus, a social phenomenon created unconsciously 'without any deliberate pursuit or coherence… without any conscious concentration (Bourdieu, 1984 p1701).

Where there is no actual wealth, some Jamaicans endeavour to create the illusion of wealth in death. This is not a new phenomenon as it is observed in other cultures. As Davies notes 'At death, identity and social status undergo major changes…In the major religions of the world, as in small tribal groups, the living manipulate human remains to effect these new statuses for themselves and for the dead' (Davies, 1997

p2-5). Bonsu and Belk also comment on the Asante response to the illusion of wealth in death. 'Bereaved Asante consumers may spend the equivalent of US$2000 on death rituals, in a country that has consistently ranked among the world's poorest with a per capita annual GDP of about US$400' (Bonsu and Belk, 2003 p43).

This research identified four main reasons for the increase in funeral cost associated with increased affluence, namely pre-paid funeral plans, big funerals as an expression of love, young affluent people, and competition and showmanship.

6.4.1 Pre-paid funeral plans

Pre-paid funeral plans are a relatively new way of funding funerals, and as the name suggests, the funeral costs are paid in advance of the person's death. They are popular because they allow an individual to spread the cost in advance of their death. They are targeted at people over the age of 50 and in some cases are sold quite aggressively to people aged 60 and above (Murphy, 2019; Wood, 2019). There is, however, no age limit on who can buy a pre-paid funeral plan. The advantages of these plans are that they guarantee the cost of the services included in the price at the point of purchase, regardless of price increases between full payment and death. They are also marketed on the realistic observation that death is often a stressful time for families and having arrangements in place eases the burden on the bereaved, and ensures the deceased gets the funeral they desire.

Table 6.3 outlines the range of pre-paid plans offered by Dignity, one of the UKs largest national funeral directors (Dignity, 2020). It is evident from the table that even a very basic funeral is quite expensive, and it makes sense to an increasing number of people to pay these costs over a period of time and spare their families the sudden

expense at their death. It is very efficient for individuals without significant estates from which their funeral funds can be deducted. They are also becoming more popular for their practical convenience as the funeral director from whom the plan is purchased becomes the focal point and one-stop-shop for the family in the event of the death. The expanding role of funeral directors is discussed in section 6.4.7 in this chapter, as their central role in death rituals is influencing the way the rituals are being performed.

Table 6.3 Pre-paid funeral plans in the UK offered by Dignity

	Plan 1 Affordable	Plan 2 Essential	Plan 3 Popular	Plan 4 For big families
Coffin/casket	Basic	Wood effect	Quality wood effect	High quality wood veneer
Limousines	No	No	1	2
Funeral procession	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional contribution	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Price, in GB£	3,095	3,495	3,850	4,195

In addition to the items listed in the table, the following are also included in the price of the plan:

Guidance on the registration of the death, and collection of all necessary paperwork for the funeral to proceed
Collection and transport of the deceased to the funeral director’s premises, at any time, 24 hours a day (within 50-mile radius)
Funeral director, driver and pallbearers to attend the service
Provision of a hearse
Free telephone advice and support for your loved ones
The cremation fees
Minister's or Officiant's fee

The costs cited in Table 6.3 relate to cremations. The ashes are presented in a receptacle of choice or deposited in a columbarium for which there is an additional fee. For burials there are additional costs as the plans do not include embalming,

burial plot, memorial or headstone. There are also costs for a burial plot, and depending on the location this ranges from £1,500 to £3,500. Neither do the costs include designing and printing the order of service, floral tributes, or the catering and venue hire for the reception. These are all extra which can be added to plans 2, 3 and 4 in the table. For the other events the choices made by the family determines the overall cost of the rituals. It is clear that funerals are expensive affairs in the UK, not just for Jamaicans but for the general population.

The situation in Jamaica with regard to pre-paid funeral plans differs slightly. Such plans are not as popular where the idea of planning for one's death seems morbid, and in some ways foolish, given the belief among some members of the society that the responsibility for one's funeral rests with one's family, particularly those with relatives abroad who are seen by Jamaicans as affluent and able to fund the rituals, whatever their actual socioeconomic status in the UK. There is also a view evident in social media videos that to plan one's funeral is tantamount to inviting an early death, either by natural or foul means. For example, a WhatsApp video shows a young man extremely upset and unwilling to discuss his funeral arrangements with his partner and her advisor as he believes they are plotting his death.

Where pre-paid plans are available the content is tailored for what Jamaicans consider important. Table 6.4 shows a comparison of packages offered by Madden's Funeral Supplies Ltd and Delapenha Funeral Home, two of Jamaica's largest firms of funeral directors, where the cost of the package is structured around the cost of the casket, and can be converted to pre-paid plans. Intended comparisons of Sam Isaacs and Browns Funeral Homes, also large and well-established, providers of funeral services were not possible due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 6.4 Pre-paid funeral plans in Jamaica

Madden's Funeral Supplies Ltd	**Delapenha Funeral Home**
1 or 2 Mirror advertisement	2 Mirror publications with photo
1 casket spray	1 floral arrangement
100 coloured front 4 page programmes	100 8-page programmes
Storage of the body (3 weeks)	Storage of the body until funeral
Preparation & dressing of the deceased	Preparation and dressing of the deceased (family provides clothes)
Transportation	Hearse
	GCT (Tax)
	Embalming
\$155,000 – 975,000 depending on casket chosen	\$230,000 - \$900,000 depending on casket chosen

'Extras' for Delaphena included announcements on TV, sourcing a minister, additional programmes, book markers, wallet cards, fans, button hole flowers, and video.

Public notification of the death is of paramount importance in Jamaican culture, and is one of the services offered by funeral directors. That function is still mainly carried out by families in the UK, increasingly via social media. However, where the deceased was a prominent member of the Jamaican community, the ritual arrangements are sometimes announced on local Jamaican focused radio stations.

In all cases in Jamaica the core functions of the funeral directors are listed secondary to the trappings of the funeral service such as publicity, programmes and flowers.

For the very affluent in any society the funds for disposing of a deceased family member has never been a great concern. There are some Jamaicans for whom an

expensive funeral with all the extras is easily affordable because of their personal wealth. For others, astute selection of pre-paid plans has enabled them to arrange a funeral with all the extras. The problem is not with these groups, but with those whose means do not easily accommodate the extras, but who now perceive the extras as necessities. The affluent are therefore driving up the cost of funerals in Jamaica and in the UK. As will be shown later, lower income Jamaicans, wishing to be perceived as more affluent often over-extend themselves financially to provide elaborate rituals. Williams (2015), as does this study, identified the fear of stigma and experience of shame as contributory factors.

6.4.2 Young affluent people

The younger generation, that is, those aged 40 years and below are seen as significant contributors to the increasing cost of the rituals, as they are most prone to incorporate the more extravagant North American practices into Jamaican rituals. One of the ministers interviewed noted the differences in funerals arranged by younger people for their peers to those of older people whoever arranges them.

> I think it's a different generation who is less informed by the Windrush generation. They're disconnected. So now, instead of it being more Jamaican influence, you're going to have it more Stateside influence. So that if you watch it now, even that 25-year old's funeral, it looked more like it was in America than in England. The way that they dressed, the cars, the types of cars that they used, the coffin, the money that was spent, the drinks… even though obviously in the Caribbean we drink, but the way that they drank it was more like you were watching a MTV Base movie to a music video. It was just so far removed from where we've come from. So, I think the generation is causing the change' (Male 40 UK Minister).

This perception is supported by another interviewee:

> 'It is a different generation. So, when my aunt died, it's her children that's sorting out the funeral, it's not husband or siblings, it's not the older generation, and they're kind of, a bit flashier, and they've got a statement to make' (Female aged 52 UK).

The issue with younger people organising the event is also a concern in Jamaica, the reason given there is that they are the ones who have travelled, are supplying the funds for the events, and therefore dictate how the rituals are to be conducted. The old adage 'he who pays the piper calls the tune' is considered to be at play here.

It is not surprising that younger people are the instigators of change, they have been the agents of change in almost every area of Jamaican culture such as sport, music, religion, dance, and language on the positive axis of the cultural spectrum, as well as the hugely negative culture of violence. What is different here is that the drivers of previous change by younger people have been effected from a position of poverty. What is happening here is that the same desire for change is being driven from a position of relative affluence, whether legally achieved or derived from illegal means. Many of the extravagant funerals of musicians and gang members are mainly in Jamaica, but increasingly in the UK they are of younger people who, as noted by Gouldson (2020) are performing rituals based on their lived experience.

An interviewee in Jamaica believed that progress depends on the young being permitted to make changes.

> I think that in all cultures generations bring in their own stamp, and I have not researched this to find out where this generation get their creativity in doing it this way. I don't know, but I do believe that part of change and progress is that each generation have their way of doing things (Female aged 63 Jamaica).

Younger people, especially those influenced by Rastafari and who identify with African practices wish to create something that is uniquely Jamaican by incorporating

African practices. Equally, those younger people who are more influenced by Western practices aim simply to integrate Jamaican symbols, such as the Jamaican flag into the rituals to create something that indicates their Jamaican identity.

What appears to be emerging are differentiated rituals for younger and older people, and, as we will see later, rituals for the lower socioeconomic groups and rituals for the elite.

6.4.3 Big funerals equal love

A contrasting view of expensive funerals being a means of 'showing off', is an alternative view that Jamaicans want to show their love for the deceased by organising extravagant events.

> People are wealthier so they want to give their loved ones a show-type funeral. How much is spent is not so much an indication of wealth but how much they are loved. It's like a physical manifestation of how this person is thought of' (Male aged 66 UK).

A 'big' funeral, which is a euphemism for a lavish funeral, is considered the ultimate expression of love. Modest events, particularly the funeral service and the burial are not viewed as a reflection of the family's means, but as a lack of love, especially if the deceased has relatives abroad in the USA or the UK who are deemed capable, by the assumption of their greater wealth, to be able to fund a lavish funeral. Failure to do so is considered miserly and unloving, and some Jamaicans admit to being shamed into complying with these expectations at a time when they felt vulnerable from grief. Such is the pressure for extravagant death rituals that even with a pre-paid funeral plan the extras can exceed the value of the plan by a significant margin.

One interviewee shared the approximate funeral costs of his brother's funeral, who had a funeral plan:

Feeding well-wishers	1,000.00
Nine-night held in hired venue with catered food	2,300.00
Set-up	500.00
Funeral and burial combined including order of Service, photographer and videographer	6,700.00
Reception	4,000.00
Total	£14,500.00

This is significantly more than the average as outlined earlier. Additional costs are incurred for extras such as a casket instead of a coffin, the number of limousines, whether a horse and carriage are used instead of a hearse, the size and complexity of floral tributes, whether the body is embalmed, and the cost of the burial plot and memorial, which, as noted earlier, varies widely in price dependent on location, and on whether doves are released, drummers hired and so on. In the case above, the price does not include the burial plot as it was purchased prior to the gentleman's death, but does include extras such as a videographer and photographer. The total cost was offset by his pre-paid funeral plan but a balance of £9,000 was still required.

The pre-paid funeral plan as shown above does not cover all the expenses of the events. For example, the size of the venue, the length of hire, the number of people catered for, the menu, the DJ, the decoration of the venue, all these can add considerably to the cost of the rituals of the nine-night and the reception. Another factor for the family to consider is the number of people to cater for at each event. In all instances this is at best a guesstimate based on the deceased's standing within the community, their work and their connections to various social groups. Also to be considered is the size of the deceased's family and *their* standing within the community, because, as discussed in Chapter 5, Jamaican death rituals are not

simply about mourning the dead, it is also, and for some primarily, about supporting the family, whether or not the deceased was personally known to them. This support for the family is noted as an essential response to death in many African nations (Mbiti, 1881; Parrinder, 1978). Baloyi, (2014: p1) outlines that 'In Africa… whilst the immediate family members of the deceased are regarded as having no strength to do anything, other members of the community, neighbours, distant family members, friends and relatives must help make the necessary arrangements for burial'. As discussed in Chapter 5 the direct community involvement is no longer as prominent in Jamaica or in the UK diaspora, but vestiges of that community support remain in physical attendance at rituals, particularly the funeral and burial services, and is highly valued by bereaved families for whom it is a reflection of the love and esteem in which their loved one was held.

While the largest funeral service I attended as part of this research was for 700 attendees in the UK, it is not unusual for a family to cater for 400 to 500 people at the reception. The participant numbers at nine-nights are dependent on the size of the venue, which can range from a 200 to 500 persons capacity.

One interviewee in Jamaica said his family spent 5 million Jamaican dollars, the equivalent of £32,000 on his father's rituals, because they wanted everyone to know how well he was loved. It is this type of extravagance that led one interviewee to claim, in regard to the changes to the rituals, that Jamaicans are now 'worshiping the dead' (Male aged 65 Jamaica).

6.4.4 Competition and showmanship

There is also a view that the escalating costs of death rituals in both the UK and in Jamaica is related to competition, as summed up by one of the interviewees:

> In the UK people are more affluent so they will do more. And even if they don't have the finances to make a big splash, they want to ensure that their family member gets a big send off and people will remember it, so, there's some competition if I'm going to be fair (Female aged 61 UK).

This competition is also evident in Jamaica, where the additions to the basic requirements of disposing of the body are chosen to showcase the family's financial standing as well as love for the deceased. This act of changing identity at death as discussed earlier in section 6.4 is evident in many cultures, particularly where poorer individuals wish to present the deceased as more affluent, and by association the immediate and extended family (Davies, 1997; Bonsu and Belk, 2003). Here there are different choices to be made, for example between types of graves, a vault ($150,000) or a sepulchre ($440,000), between the style of the order of service, and between the types of keepsakes and mementos of the deceased that will be given to attendees at the funeral service. These include book marks, fans, bottles of water with the deceased's photograph on the label, wallet cards and so on.

In Jamaica the style of the casket can make a significant difference to the cost of the funeral and burial package and the funeral directors are very much aware of the competition around funerals, as my visits to the funeral directors who had caskets available for viewing showed. They began by presenting the 'most popular' caskets and progressed to the most expensive. On both occasions I had to ask to be shown the least expensive casket which they did with some reluctance, and a little disdain. The $820,000 difference between the cheapest and most expensive was not obvious

to me. This was explained by way of comfort for the deceased. I was puzzled as to how the deceased would know the difference.

The link between death and consumption was noted by Mitford (1963; 1998) in the American context, and observed by Bonsu and Belk (2003) in the African context. Mitford (1963; 1998) charted the increasing influence of funeral directors in the US, much of which is relevant to both the UK and Jamaica. Bonsu and Belk (2003) also observe that what they claim was truer for Western societies is now becoming common-place in Africa, and as this study shows is also relevant in Jamaica and among Jamaicans in the UK.

> The bereaved also makes conspicuous effort to make sense of death in the human experience. These reflections often generate a variety of negative emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, and shame and feelings of self-inadequacy which may be assuaged by consumption such as conspicuous mortuary expression of affluence (Bonsu and Belk, 2003 p41).

These are the emotions skilled sales persons in the funeral industry exploit in persuading the bereaved to select caskets based on comfort for people who are dead. Funeral directors in both Jamaica and in the UK are aware of the further observations made by Bonsu and Belk, that in addition to providing emotional relief,

> Death-ritual consumption choices may facilitate mobility toward consumer identity aspirations as they provide evidence to self and others that the mourner is caring, sentimental, or from an illustrious family. As material possessions have become markers of identity and social status, consumption has become an effective vehicle for refining identities through symbolic dialogue (Bonsu and Belk, 2003 p42).

Morgan (2020 p144-148) describes a woman who, due to neglect of her children who all lived abroad in relative affluence, died in poverty of malnutrition complications, and on the lavish rituals provided for her by her children who wished to appear

caring. Another, more Jamaican related explanation for the escalating cost is what one of the Jamaican interviewees referred to as Jamaican showmanship and competition:

> They're competing. If one funeral had a fan, they have to have a fan, if another had a book mark, they have to have one too, and so it all adds up (Male aged 49 Jamaica).

The showmanship, while exhibiting some similarities in both locations is also evolving in differing ways. In the UK as well as in Jamaica the extravagance is reflected in the funeral services which are conducted in Pentecostal Christian churches. They can be up to five hours in length and akin to concerts with contributors receiving applause not only for tribute of song and reflections, but for reading scriptures from the Bible. The exception to this trend are the funerals conducted in Catholic churches. As discussed in Chapter 5, they are generally an hour in length and follow a set format whether they occur in Jamaica or in the UK. There is also extravagance in the transport of the deceased. Some funeral directors in Jamaica have incorporated speakers into the hearses or on the backs of trucks and the deceased is transported to loud music of the family's choice. This practice is not evident in the UK where the quiet sedate transmission of the coffin or casket is still the norm, whether by hearse or by the increasing use of horse drawn carriages such as shown in Fig 6.1.

I did not observe the size and extravagance of the UK reception in Jamaica, and indeed not every funeral service and burial is followed by a formal repass. Two interviewees, however, mentioned that they had overheard comments from individuals that they would not attend a funeral if there was to be no repass. One woman said some families are feeling pressured into having a repass, adding to the costs, again the application of stigma and resulting shame.

Fig 6.1 Horse drawn carriage transporting the casket. Source: Researcher's image

Everyone I spoke to in Jamaica about the cost of death rituals said they felt the costs were spiralling out of control. In the UK the view was that they were escalating rapidly but that people just needed to be more discerning. The main contributory factors this research established for the escalating cost of death rituals are outlined below.

The Jamaican UK diaspora, and indeed the diasporas in the USA and Canada are fuelling the rising cost of death rituals in Jamaica by providing the funds for the ever-increasing costs.

The study suggests in Chapter 5 that the extravagant rituals of funerals, burial and reception have become substitutes for weddings as is evidenced by colour coding, release of doves, decorated venues, mementos, and three course meals often with a range of desserts, which are all features of modern Jamaican weddings. Indeed,

there are receptions where wedding speech-like tributes are encouraged. The meaning of the rituals has therefore been transformed from one of supporting the family to one of providing the deceased with an ‘event’ they possibly had not had in life.

Technology, and its contribution to the process of transforming the rituals, is discussed in detail in section 6.5. Here the commentary is on its specific effect on the increasing cost of the rituals. With many events now being recorded and shared internationally, many families no longer perceive a small, quiet funeral as an option as they are concerned that they will be judged by the local and international extended family. This is fuelling the showmanship and one upmanship observed by some interviewees. The recordings themselves and the hire of photographers and videographers are also adding to the costs.

One of the dialectical results of the escalating cost of burial is an increase in cremations. Previously cremations were equated with poverty on the level of pauperism. Only the very poor, unable to afford the cheapest of plots for burial, were cremated. Cremation among many Black Jamaicans is still seen as the poor man’s option, but that view is changing. The process by which this is being achieved involves a number of governmental and individual factors. A former Jamaican Prime Minister, Bruce Golding, made a plea for more Jamaicans to consider cremation as a disposal option as the cemeteries were nearing capacity. He suggested that members of parliament should set an example. This was a significant departure from the previous association of Jamaicans with burials. It appeared that the prime minister was asking the nation to set aside religious, spiritual and traditional beliefs for pragmatic solutions. The call was heeded by high profile Jamaican celebrities

such as Dorraine Samuels, a longstanding radio and TV personality of 38 years whose ashes were brought to her televised thanksgiving service watched by thousands in Jamaica and in the UK. Her cremation, and in the UK the cremation of musicians such as David Bowie, both of whom are known to be very wealthy, legitimised this form of disposal for many Jamaicans who had previously considered cremation a pauper's option.

However, even as some Jamaicans opt for cremation on financial grounds, there is an accompanying sense of loss for the family members who cannot be buried alongside other relatives where the family plot is fully occupied or the decision for cremation is based solely on costs. For some Jamaicans the family plot is an integral part of their cultural heritage and is part of their identity. Chevannes observes that 'As a part of the family land, the family plot spatially and symbolically links the ancestors with their living descendants. Family plots are usually laid out in close proximity to the house, where they may be tended and kept clean' (Chevannes, 1994 p26). According to Olwig (1993) this practice is also true for the Caribbean people of Nevis, and Parrinder (1978) observes it in most West African cultures from whom Black Jamaicans are descended. In cases where the deceased cannot be buried in the family plot there is likely to be psychological ramifications for the bereaved, and with the increasing use of cremations further study to determine the extent to which these people are affected would be useful to identify the best ways to support them in their grieving.

Not all families are thus affected as some are opting for cremation due to a change in their belief that the influence of the ancestors in their life is dependent on close interment to the living. For a small number of Jamaicans, particularly those in the

urban areas, there is concern that the value of their property may be adversely affected if it is populated with graves.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further increased the use of cremation as a disposal of choice for more families. Speaking to The Star newspaper in Jamaica the president of the Jamaica Association of Certified Embalmers and Funeral Director Calvin Lyn estimated a 25 - 30 percent increase in requests for cremations which he attributes partly to cremations being a cheaper option, and partly to the restrictions on burials imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic which meant that some families were unable to pay the cost of keeping their loved ones refrigerated for long periods of time. "Some people are not keeping the remains for long ... it is too costly for a lot of people, so they decide to go ahead with cremations." He does, however, note that there were still families prepared to wait for a big funeral, "but you have a few people who are still waiting to get the crowd" (Lyn, 2020 n/p).

Increased cremation is one of two transformations that has resulted from Government intervention, the other is the use of cemeteries for families for whom burials on family land compromises the water supply. This is a measure that was brought in during the HIV/AIDs epidemic during the 1980s which caused an excess in the mortality rate and posed unprecedented practical problems with burials. While the cost and Westernised content of the rituals have been driven by the elite and more affluent Jamaicans, the African content has had more subaltern inspirations working dialectically against Western acculturation of the rituals, in part influenced by the activities of Rastafari. This is addressed in greater detail in section 6.8, changing religious beliefs.

This section demonstrated that affluence, or the wish to appear affluent, has a significant influence on expensive and elaborate death rituals, which in turn is stimulating an increase in the use of cremations. The final of the main causes of the transformation of the rituals as suggested by the interviewees is technology, which my own observations show plays a bigger part in the changes than suggested by them.

6.5 Technology

Technology, working in a variety of ways to transform the meanings of the rituals, was viewed as one of the main influences of changes to Jamaican death rituals by only two of the interviewees. It facilitates the process of acculturation, exposing Jamaicans in Jamaica to death practices in other cultures, particularly the UK, the USA and countries in Africa such as Ethiopia, Nigeria and Ghana, which are increasingly being incorporated into Jamaican death rituals. The widely available mobile phone has made communication between Jamaicans and the UK diaspora much easier. Major platforms such as Skype, Facebook, Messenger, YouTube and Zoom are adding visual as well as audio to communication, and, of the utmost importance, these platforms are free, which makes them accessible to many of Jamaica’s low-income population. The ability to video record death rituals to be shared with family members, or more publicly on YouTube and other platforms has influenced the cross-fertilisation of practises. This is also true for the diasporas in the USA and Canada both of whom, along with the UK, have influenced Jamaican death rituals.

> But probably the biggest thing that's impacted on changes is the global village syndrome. The fact that the earth is connected up now, so I think social media has a lot of impact' (Male 52 UK).

Social media does indeed make the concept of the Jamaican extended family a reality. In addition to the direct communication between family and friends, television, films, radio and newspapers are more readily available via satellite and the internet in Jamaica. Technology has had an effect on the expectations of many Jamaicans on how to conduct funerals and burials, particularly those who wish to be considered educated or socially upwardly mobile. For instance, the USA has influenced the almost exclusive use of caskets in Jamaica, and it is also becoming a feature of UK funerals. Only one of the funerals I observed used a coffin. Within the UK a Rastafari minister explained that technology has brought his rituals to the attention of a much wider audience:

> The technology has been a big help. It really has. I get work all over the country because of that. Because of that a lot of young people are coming to me (Male aged 60 UK, minister).

Technology is used increasingly within the rituals. At six of the funeral services I observed in the UK and the two in Jamaica, photographic montages and videos of the deceased were played on large television screens at the front of the church. Many more eulogies and tributes were read from mobile phones than from paper, sometimes with frustrating consequences when they malfunctioned. The words of hymns were often projected onto TV screens in some churches, which was very helpful for those attendees who were unable to secure an order of service programme containing the songs. At one of the larger funerals the entire order of service was projected onto screens for the congregation: a small saving on the number of programmes to be printed, in an otherwise lavish funeral.

In the UK I attended two funerals where video tributes were shown from family members in Jamaica who were unable to attend, and at another a video recording was integrated into a live tribute.

The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions accelerated the use of technology at many more funerals and other death rituals. Live streaming of funerals became widespread from crematoriums, or on Zoom or YouTube platforms. Where live streaming was not possible or desirable, recordings of the events were made available on YouTube, sometimes restricted to family and friends, others were made publicly available.

Technology has helped to maintain Jamaican's desire for the death of a family member to be as widely acknowledged as possible, and for huge attendances at funerals to reflect love and respect for the deceased. Families have reported being pleased by 'virtual' attendance at funerals either on live streams or by the numbers who watched the recording. Virtual books of condolences were posted and signed online.

However, the need for physical presence at death rituals is so strong for some Jamaicans, that during the pandemic they still attended funerals knowing the limitations on numbers meant they would not be allowed into the buildings. They gathered outside, often watching the live stream on their mobile phones. They attended the cemeteries, also waiting outside while the burial took place. When asked why they didn't just watch from home, the usual response was that it was important for the family to know that they made the effort to come out and support them physically, even in the rain and the snow.

If one was looking for the core meaning of Jamaican death rituals, the essence that survives in the most difficult of circumstances, it is presence. It is not as some people

have claimed the thought of a free meal, or a party, or a social event, it is letting a grieving family know that they are supported, that it mattered that their loved one was loved and respected and will be remembered by more than just the family. The rituals in this sense function to maintain the sense of community as the classic ritual theorists such as Robertson-Smith (1889) Durkheim (1912) and Turner (1967) posited.

This presence at events is perhaps doubly important as it is increasingly missing from the intimate rituals of death such as closing the eyes of the deceased, washing, dressing, and laying out of the corpse, which are in some cases exclusively undertaken by medical and other professional staff.

6.6 Medicalisation of death and the increasing influence of funeral directors

A major influence on the changes to Jamaican death rituals can be attributed to the process of medicalisation of death and the professionalisation of disposing of the body (Mitford, 1963; 1978; Naylor, 1989). No one I spoke to had an expectation that the family would manage the disposal of the body, and among younger people they were not aware that in the past the family carried out these duties.

One of the contributing factors is that more deaths take place in hospitals than fifty years ago (Cardona et al, 2019). Even if family members are present at the point of death, the body is moved to the hospital morgue and kept refrigerated until it is removed by the funeral director appointed by the family. In some cases, the body is taken into police custody if the death was the result of unlawful killing or had happened under suspicious circumstances. The expectation and reality is that the body will be kept refrigerated until the funeral or cremation.

Once in the care of the funeral director many of the duties usually carried out by the family such as washing the body and preparing it for burial are left to the funeral directors. However, some family who request this are enabled to dress the body for burial under the guidance of the funeral director.

The process following death at home in Jamaica prior to the extensive use of funeral directors is described in Chapter 5. A brief overview of the process in the UK is given here to assist comprehension of the current UK transformations and the role of funeral directors in them.

In the UK the main function of funeral directors, originally called undertakers, was to provide a made-to-measure coffin and transport it to the home of the deceased, wash and dress the body and 'lay' it out inside the coffin until the funeral some three to four days later, contact ministers, hire grave diggers to dig the grave, and transport the coffin to the church and cemetery on the day of the funeral. They liaised with the family to ensure their wishes were being carried out. It was not until the 1950s when 'chapels of rest' came into being and the body could be accommodated away from the home. This timeline is also reflected in Jamaica but at a slower pace. Although embalming had been used for thousands of years in many civilisations such as Ancient Egypt, it wasn't until the early twentieth century that it was made more widely available to those who could afford it for preserving their relatives (Finney et al, 2022). That, coupled with the more widespread use of refrigeration between 1920 and 1950 (Brown, 2009) meant the body can be kept much longer. Apart from the addition of embalming, the basic duties of the funeral director have remained fairly consistent (Rawlinson, 2012).

Professional funeral directing was not to be offered in Jamaica until much later, and initially, as in the UK, only the affluent could avail themselves of it. One of the first services they offered was to undertake making the coffin. This diminished the need for local carpenters to build a coffin. When embalmed the body could be dressed instead of shrouded for burial, and beautified with skin preparations and hair products. The advantage for families in both the UK and Jamaica was the one-stop convenience of the undertaker for disposing of the body, which freed up time to attend to the other rituals such as the nine-night, and receiving the stream of well-wishers visiting the home of the deceased, the 'dead yard'.

It was once the practice that the body was brought in the coffin to the deceased's home for the set-up, but this practice was dispensed with earlier in Jamaica than in the UK due to the heat. In the UK factors which led to this service being withdrawn or not requested were the extra expense, and the diminishing size of homes which could no longer accommodate a coffin or the much larger caskets. As discussed earlier, coffins are no longer used in Jamaica unless specially requested, as only caskets are routinely offered by Jamaican funeral directors. This service has, however, been modified to the casket or coffin being opened at the funeral service for a last viewing of the deceased. For legal reasons it is the responsibility of the funeral director to open the coffin.

To these basic services have been added a raft of others as funerals and burials have become more extravagant, partly influenced by increased affluence, and partly by the introduction of pre-paid funeral plans which were discussed in 6.4. An advantage of being able to plan and pay for funerals prior to death is the ability to specify the nature of the event, in the way weddings, christenings or parties are planned. Inclusion and omission of specific rituals can be made. For example, a

number of people are choosing not to have the coffin or casket opened at the funeral service, preferring instead to have a photograph placed on the coffin/casket, often one they have previously selected to reflect the way they wish to be remembered.

Pre-paid funeral plans are felt by some of the interviewees, and general members of the Jamaican public with whom I spoke, to be contributing to the extravagant funerals being observed. They are seen to set standards so high that family members for whom the deceased did not have a pre-paid plan, cannot compete without the possibility of bankruptcy. Funerals are purported to cost more than weddings and are often funded by loans. One interviewee in Jamaica said she knew of a family who was forced to surrender the deeds to the family land to the funeral director, to be returned when the family are able to pay for the funeral. There are tales of funeral directors refusing to take the body to the church for the funeral until the full costs were paid, and family members 'scrambling' for money while the congregation waited in the church.

From my own observations funeral directors are taking a much more active role in the rituals beyond transporting the body to the church and cemetery, and opening and closing the coffin or casket for viewing of the body. This is particularly so and more acutely observed in the UK at burials. One example is a burial where the funeral director guided the men on how to lower the casket into the grave, positioning and re-positioning them, and praising them on a job well done. She, and not the minister or a family member, dug the first bit of earth into the grave prior indicating to the family to join her. After the mounding of the grave, she organised the placement of the floral tributes, directed photographic opportunities, released doves, lit candles and incense and poured the final libation, while the officiating Christian minister looked on from the side-line bemused.

In an interview later with the minister, he said he was not only unaware that these activities would be taking place, but as this was a Christian funeral, he was unaware of what the candles, incense and libation meant. While this was the most directive of the observations, lower levels of 'direction' were observed at four other funerals.

Funeral directors were accused of being the main instigators of the increasing cost of funerals by 40% of the interviewees in Jamaica. One said the cost of a basic funeral can double within a six-month period. On my visit to three funeral directors, they admitted that prices do fluctuate as a result of the unstable Jamaican dollar, but that they should not double in that period of time. There was also a view in Jamaica that some of the newer funeral directors, known locally as 'mushrooms' because they seem to spring up overnight and disappear after short periods of trading, are driven by capital and not service. I visited one to compare costs and services with two of the more established businesses. Having visited a number of funeral directors in the UK for personal reasons as well as for the purposes of this research, I was extremely surprised by the experience of the 'mushroom' funeral director which included waiting in a very small and crowded office in a shopping centre where the discussions and negotiation of other customers could be overheard. They did not offer a pre-paid service nor did they have a printed pricelist for the customer to take away. All prices were contained in the one brochure shared by the three sales consultants.

The paucity of decorum was not reflected in lower prices, its basic services being comparable to those of the more established businesses. There were many 'extras' most of which were listed above the basic services. (See Fig 6.2)

Fig 6.2 Pricelist for a 'mushroom' funeral service. Source: Researcher's image

What they offered, which was absent from the others, was guidance to customers on the process of applying for a late-night licence for the nine-night event. They were also able to supply a band to play at the nine-night, offering the old-style nine-night music, religious and more modern songs. This is a new addition to the nine-night ritual and one derided by Hutton in William's (2015) article as excluding the local community.

> Yet there are still 'duppy bands' that are preserving the traditional wake rituals. Invariably, these bands and sound systems are brought into the community

> and the community members who used to participate in these rituals are now divorced from these rituals, side-lined' (Williams, 2015 n/p).

Funeral directors, by appropriating the duties previously carried out by the family, contribute in a significant way to the process of transformation of Jamaican death rituals, but this is not peculiar to Jamaica. Funeral directors have been the subject of investigation by the Government's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in the UK in both their practices and their costs (CMA, 2018). Funeral services are unregulated in Jamaica and in the UK. In both places there are concerns about the rising cost of funerals and other associated services as expressed by Hanna (2021) in Jamaica, and Peachey (2020) in the UK. The UK Government has consulted on regulations for the administration of pre-paid funeral plans which was enacted in July 2022 (Financial Conduct Authority, 2021), and has regulated burial and cremation services in Scotland.

> With the passing into law of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016, Scottish funeral directors will soon operate under a new dedicated regulatory framework, which will be the first of its kind in the UK and will result in the introduction of a statutory inspector of funeral directors, regulations governing the funeral profession and possible licensing of funeral directors' (National Association of Funeral Directors, 2017 n/p).

There are no plans for funeral services to be regulated in Jamaica, although there are government discussions on regulating the types of monuments that can be erected in cemeteries which currently can be very elaborate (Gouldson, 2020 n/p). While this chapter has so far addressed the tangible changes to the death rituals, they are the result of intangible changes in values and religious beliefs, both of which permeate all aspects of Jamaican death rituals and are addressed in 6.7 and 6.8.

6.7 Changing values

The changes in the death rituals are inextricably linked to changing Jamaican values, which again present a complex set of issues that involve a decrease in some values considered ‘traditional’ such as community and religion; an increase in others such as glitz, glamour and modernity, and equal but opposing emphasis on others such as ancestors and African connections. The changes in the traditional value can be interpreted to affect more adversely the sections of the communities that perceive the changes as a crisis.

Less emphasis is placed on valuing community. This was the major concern being expressed by those over the age of 60 who are experiencing the changes to the rituals as a crisis of heritage and national identity. Those over 60 years of age, and those in the lower socioeconomic groups who would have been the main financial beneficiaries of the community response, remember more clearly the community facet of the rituals. It was interesting that of the values listed by the Jamaican Government for taking the nation forward to developed status, community was not included. In inviting individuals to play their part in making 2030 a reality the Government encourages individuals to

> Return to/or strengthen the core values and attitudes which guided your parents and fore-parents. These include: trust, honesty and truthfulness, respect, forgiveness and tolerance, love, peace, unity, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, integrity, punctuality and good work ethic (Jamaica Information Services 2015 (Accessed 17/01/2022).

In terms of national identity, community disintegration results in fragmented identities and adversely affects national identity, a factor in increased crime. This is the opposite of the Government’s desire. When the cohesion of the community breaks

down, individuals are forced to rely on individual identity as noted by Herbert, ‘Fragmented and competing identities, and low levels of societal cohesion, are key factors that can perpetuate state fragility’ (Herbert, 2013 p1). Strong communities that are able to influence each other to adhere to the national vision are the strength of the nation, and Jamaicans are fragmented in their loyalty to a national plan as is evidenced by the high levels of crime including unlawful killings, which is an anathema of the Government’s stated values of trust, honesty and truthfulness, love and peace. Jamaicans are becoming more individualist, which is being reflected in the increasingly individualised rituals. Paradoxically, in the UK diaspora where the fragmentation is perceived more acutely as a threat to cultural as well as national identity, the rituals are reinforced with symbols of national identity such as the Jamaican flag, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Less emphasis is placed on valuing religion. The number of Jamaicans who admit to having a religion has been declining at each census according to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (2001, 2011), and the results of this study are consistent with that decline. A total of 48% of interviewees in the study either said they had no religion or declined to answer, which could be interpreted as not having one. Given that most nation’s death rituals are derived from their religion(s) it is reasonable to deduce that lack of knowledge of the rituals is consistent with the lack of value placed on religion. Religion and religious practices are also not represented among the ‘core values and attitudes which guided your parents and fore-parents’ the Government is encouraging Jamaicans to embrace. They are all of course values to be found in Christianity, which is the main religion in Jamaica, but it is not expressly stated. Instead, reference is made to Jamaica being a ‘deeply spiritual’ nation (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2010 p2) which allows for the accommodation of other beliefs

and practices. It could be concluded that the Government, in its drive for developed status is downplaying religion, as this is in decline in many of the developed countries of the Western World. Within the plan for Jamaica's future there is evidence of a repositioning of Jamaica from an *ethnie* nation to a civic nation (Smith, 1991 p19), and a fragmentation of culture is a consequence of such a move. During this transitional phase, which can be interpreted as national liminality, the experience for many Jamaicans is one of crisis in many areas of their lives, including cultural and national identities.

Equal but opposing emphasis is placed on valuing the ancestors and valuing African connections. The research finds that Jamaicans are dichotomous in the value placed on the role and function of the ancestors in daily life and in the rituals. Groups such as Rastafari and other individuals are actively incorporating African and ancestral practices into the rituals, which are at odds with those who see this as a 'backward' step, and a hindrance to Jamaica's progress to developed nation status.

More emphasis is placed on valuing glitz and glamour. There are some Jamaicans for whom glitz and glamour is integral to their national identity. One of the answers given to Thomas in her question to a group of dancers on what it means to be Jamaican reflects this

> In Jamaica…we are a culture of tricksters, we are a culture of loud mouth people, we are a culture of expressive people. If I had a word to describe Jamaican culture, I would say it's big. We do everything in a very big, loud, attention-getting way. We are clever people you know. Very clever. You can't keep Jamaicans out of anything' (Thomas, 2004 p1-2)

This big, loud attention-getting quality is being increasingly exhibited in the death rituals. It would be inaccurate to claim that glitz and glamour is a replacement for

substance within all of the rituals as in many of the nine-nights, but there is a danger that the sacredness of the funeral ritual could also be compromised, particularly with the increased use of audio and video recordings. The possibility exists for funerals to become no more than concerts to the deceased.

More emphasis placed on valuing modernity. In this respect the nation is taking its lead from the Government's vision for Jamaica as a technology enabled, knowledge-based society. One in which 'technology and innovation will help us to become a well-educated society that depends on our knowledge to drive our development' (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2010 p46). The plan places young people at the centre of implementation. It is not surprising that without a similar forceful voice for the importance of cultural practices such as death rituals in the nation's future, they are becoming extinct.

More emphasis is placed on valuing national identity in the diaspora. While Jamaica forges ahead to become a developed nation, some Jamaicans in the developed UK nation are increasingly aware of the erosion of heritage that is a consequence of that development, erosion of communities, insular living, poor work-life balance, lack of respect for elders, and they fear that this will be replicated in Jamaica. For example, a 2019 CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development) survey found 'poor work-life balance a particular problem for UK workers, with many admitting their job made it hard to switch off in their downtime and caused disruption to their family life' (Baska, 2019 n/p), to which disruption to community life can also be added. The Jamaican Government goes to great lengths to include members of the diasporas in its visions and plans for Jamaica. 'The plan includes the views of students, NGOs and community groups, churches, trades unions, media, and public and private sector groups, from across the island and in the diaspora' (Planning Institute of

Jamaica, 2010 p12) and encourages all Jamaicans to subscribe to the 'Jamaica Brand', by which is meant the international profile Jamaica has in terms of sport, music, food, Rastafari, and the well-recognised Jamaican flag. Presumably it does not wish for the diaspora to subscribe to the alternative 'Jamaica Brand' of international crime and unlawful killing that are being replicated in the UK, or to the disintegration of communities which results in these behaviours. The changing rituals appear to impact more adversely Jamaicans in the UK diaspora in terms of loss of national identity. It is from within this group that overt symbols of Jamaican identity such as the flag and its colours, and the colours of Rastafari are incorporated into the rituals. The Jamaican cohort on the other hand are more secure in their national identity, as they do not perceive it to be under threat from other competing cultural expressions of death.

6.8 Changing religious beliefs including the influence of Rastafari

Another major influence on the changes to Jamaican death rituals is changing religious beliefs. Jamaica is officially a Christian nation as noted in Chapter 3, and indicated by the latest (2011) census. Jamaica is said to have the most churches per capita in the world (Patterson, 2019 inside sleeve). However, in response to the question 'what is your religion?' 25 of the 48 interviewees either said they had no religion or declined an answer. Fig 6.3 and Table 6.5 show the interviewees' responses to religion.

In the UK nine interviewees said they had no religion. Fig 6.5 below shows that the majority of these were in the 18-59 age range, with only one person in the 60-69 age range (actually aged 62) saying they did not have a religion. Of those who said they

had a religion, one was Rastafari, the others were all Christians. Some were happy to be generally Christian while others wanted to specify the particular denomination of Christianity as this is an important matter for some Jamaicans. See Table 6.5. For example, a Seventh Day Adventist worships at church on a Saturday rather than Sunday, and Catholics have scripted and highly ritualised masses compared to the more fluid services in Pentecostal worship.

Figure 6.3 Religious backgrounds of UK interviewees

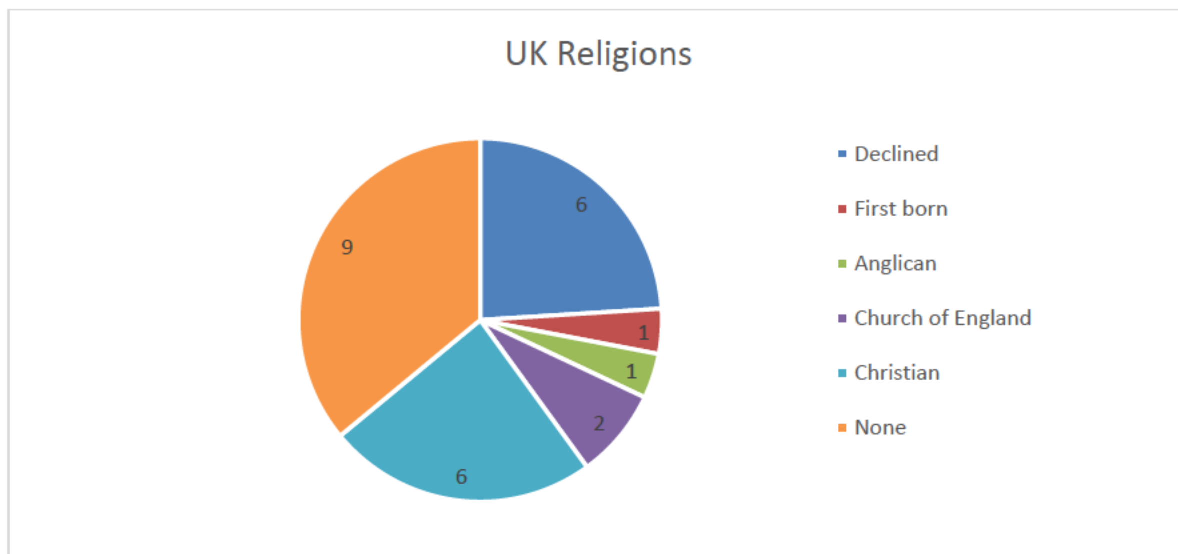


Table 6.5 Religious backgrounds of UK interviewees by age

Age	Religion
18-30	D, N.
31-49	A, C, N, N, N, N.
50-59	N, N, N, P, R.
60-69	C, C, C, C, C, C of E, C of E, N.
70-79	
80-89	Ag, CFB
90+	

Key for religion

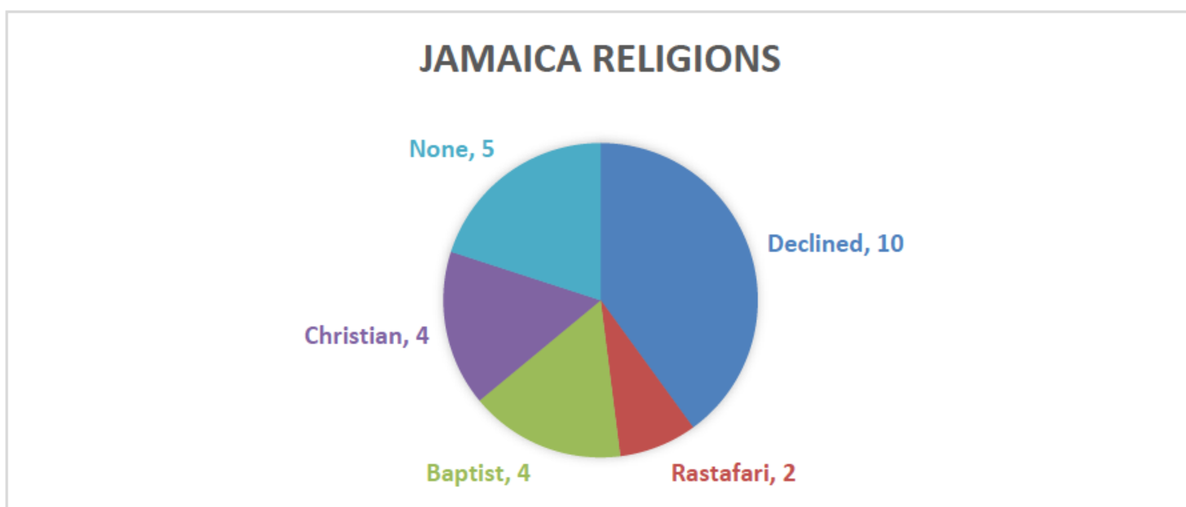
A = Atheist
B = Baptist
Ag = Anglican
C = Christian
Ca = Catholic
Pr = Presbyterian
Ch = Christadelphian
CofE = Church of England
CFB = Church of the First Born
D = Declined an answer
S = Salvationist
R = Rastafari
I = Interfaith
M = Methodist
N = None
P = Pentecostal

One young man said that despite living in a Christian household he did not have a religion himself.

> Me personally, I wouldn't say I have a religion, but my family are Christians, but yeah, I'd say I don't have one (Male aged 21 UK).

In Jamaica five of the interviewees said they had no religion, and ten declined to answer. See Fig 6.4 below.

Figure 6.4 Religious backgrounds of Jamaica interviewees



At the conclusion of the interviews, half of those who had declined to answer the question on religion said they did not have a religion but had not wanted it recorded. It could be reasonably inferred that this was also the case for the other five. Similar to the UK interviewees, all those who declined to answer were mainly in the 18-59 age group with one 65-year-old also having no religion. It is quite possible that the non-respondent Jamaica cohort were in similar situations to the young man in the UK, that is, living in a Christian family with the assumption by others of their Christian status. Those who are brave enough in the general society to declare their non-

religious status are often viewed with suspicion of being in league with the devil or with practitioners of obeah. It is not surprising therefore that some of the interviewees were reluctant to declare their (non) religious status.

Table 6.6 Religion of Jamaica interviewees by age

Age	Religion
18-30	N
31-49	B, C, C, C.
50-59	Ca, N, N, N.
60-69	B, C, I, N, R, R.
70-79	B, Ch, I, P.
80-89	M, S.
90+	B

None = 5, Christian = 4, Baptist = 4, Rastafari = 2

Of those with religion who were not Christians, two were Interfaith ministers and two were Rastafari. The lack of religion, or the divergence from Christianity were seen by many of the older interviewees as the main cause of the younger generation not knowing the rituals. This was not surprising, given the links between rituals, particularly those of rites of passage, and religion (Durkheim, 1912; van Gennep, 1960).

The influence of changing religious beliefs on transforming death rituals can be accounted for in two ways. Firstly, lack of belief in Christianity leads to lack of church attendance which is where the practices around set-up, nine-night, funerals and burials are generally learned. They are not taught specifically, but, like other social customs and cultural practices, they are learned by observation and repetition (Durkheim ,1912; van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967; Bell, 2009; Bigambo, 2019).

Traditionally, Jamaican death rituals have straddled the rituals of Christianity, and those of African traditional religions, what Geertz (1973) refers to as ‘rationalized’ and

‘traditional’ religions. The difference between the two he maintains is predicated on ‘the difference in the relationship between religious concepts and social forms’ (Geertz, 1973 p171)

> Traditional religions are inextricably bound up with secular customs and draw all branches of human activity…into the circle of symbolic magic (Geertz, 1973 p171).

Many of the rituals described in section 5.10 stem from the African religions, Geertz’s ‘traditional’ religion, and, because they often conflict with Christian ‘rationalized’ religion beliefs, they are not spoken of in Christian groups, or are dismissed as superstitions. One exception to this is the nine-night, which was prohibited by slave owners in Jamaica on the basis of being full of superstition. I witnessed an extremely heated discussion between a devout Christian who was aghast that a person she considered intelligent, whom she had just discovered was from the Kumina group, could hold beliefs in spirits and the role of the ancestors in the everyday lives of the living. This interchange was a microcosm of a wider debate about Africa centric rituals and Christian rituals which is discussed in Chapter 8.

This, according to Geertz, is because ‘rationalized’ religions

> are not so thoroughly intertwined with the concrete details of ordinary life, they are ‘apart’, ‘above’ and ‘outside’ of them, and the relations of the systems of ritual and beliefs in which they are embodied to secular society are not intimate and unexamined but distant and problematic (Geertz, 1973 p171).

Thus, rationalized religion is interpreted by some Jamaicans as being more civilised, more objective, less secretive and less dependent on the whim of ancestors. For others Western Christianity is not to be trusted as its holy book, the Bible, was used to justify the enslavement of their ancestors, and is perceived to maintain a form of psychological slavery as described in Beckford’s (2022) film *After the flood: the*

church, slavery and reconciliation. Rastafari is particularly vocal on this matter, and, while originally ridiculed and castigated by the wider community in the first four decades of their development, their tenets have gained wider support not just in Jamaica but in the international community (Yuajah, 2014; Buzzuti-Jones, 2014; DeAngelis, 2022)

The issue of religion in Jamaica is a complex one. Many Jamaicans are at a religious crossroad. Some are holding fast to their Christian beliefs and strongly bemoan the diminishing influence of Christianity on death rituals, some have rejected Christianity in favour of other religions and are incorporating rituals of the new religions into their death rituals, while others have maintained a belief in aspects of Christianity while exploring a new religion and therefore practise the rituals from both religions. A recent Public Religion Research Institute survey found this to be true for 16% of Americans who proport to follow the teachings or practices of more than one religion (Fetsch, 2014). Some Jamaicans have rejected all forms of organised religion seeing themselves as spiritual practitioners instead. For these Jamaicans the rituals are less about religion and more about custom, culture, heritage, and national identity. There is also a group that sits in the liminal space of rejecting Christianity but has not yet found a replacement.

The study did not ascertain how long interviewees had been without a religion, but as the majority were 60 and below, it is reasonable to surmise that some of these, and others like them, have been raising children in the 18-49 age group in which the largest number of no religion is reported. It is also reasonable to assume that they too are not regular church attendees and have not learned the rituals and their meanings, or that their knowledge is patchy and incomplete. This lack of knowledge was highlighted by two Christian ministers in their interviews about funerals at which

they had officiated. The first talked at length about the funeral of a twenty-five-year-old at whom most of the attendees were under the age of forty.

> So, at the graveside it was really quiet for a long time, everybody was looking at me to sing the songs, and I'm like no, I'm not singing because these guys don't know it, because they're not church. The Windrush generation, all of them were engraved in the church, and when we get to the graveside there is a respect for what they have known through Sunday school. They understand the sacredness of it, so they'll sing the songs… for the younger ones, things will change because they're not in church, for some of them, that was the first time they'd been in a church (Male 40, UK Minister).

Having no religion younger people are being increasingly guided by funeral directors whose main concern may not be the observation of tradition, but increasing profit margins. With increasing reliance on funeral directors younger Jamaicans are becoming spectators to the rituals rather than participants in them.

The second way in which changing religious beliefs are affecting Jamaican death rituals was alluded to by the minister who was bemused at the burial where incense and candles were burned and a libation poured. That is, the influence of other religions which has been briefly referred to above. By far the chief religious influence on Jamaican death rituals observed in this study is that of Rastafari.

The position of Rastafari as a religion in Jamaica is a complex one and holds significant ambivalence for Jamaicans. While Rastafari's holy book is the Bible, it is not the King James version widely used in Christian denominations across Jamaica and in the UK diaspora, but rather a Rastafari version (*Holy Bible Rastafari Version*, 2019). Rastafari's use of marijuana as its sacred herb and its recognition of Haile Selassie as God sets it at odds with many devout Christians. However, its spiritual message of oneness, peace and love being the solution to Jamaica's many ills also gained it respect which is not always openly acknowledged among older Jamaicans,

but its teachings of Black pride find acceptance in a wide range of ages and social groups within Jamaica and internationally.

Rastafari is strongly influenced by the teachings of Jamaica's first national hero Marcus Garvey. It is a religion of resistance, and is founded on contesting Jamaica's history, heritage, and national identity that successive governments have tried to construct. It is inspired by those who espoused challenge and resistance such as the Maroons of Jamaica, Marcus Garvey and Haile Selassie as discussed in Chapter 3. Rastafari's influence on Jamaica's music, fashion, hairstyle in the form of dreadlocks, and even diet have been extensively researched (Owens, 1976; Hill 1981; Campbell, 1985; Simpson, 1985; Chevannes, 1994; Pollard, 1994; Murell et al, 1998; Beckford, 2014; Walstein, 2016) but there has been no enquiry into its influence on Jamaican death rituals. This may be attributed to Rastafari original beliefs that a true Rastafari could not die, and as such, had no need for death rituals. This, as discussed in Chapter 3, began to change in the 1970s, ironically through a movement in the UK where members of the religion deemed it unsatisfactory for a lifelong devotee to be buried as Christians by non-Rastafari family. By the 1980s Rastafari had created rituals to respond to dying and death. While these were centred in African traditions, they were shaped by the lived experiences and beliefs of Rastafari in the UK and in Jamaica, using the structure of the existing rituals.

As discussed in Chapter 5 Rastafari death rituals are easily recognised by the use of the Rastafari 'colours', which are red, green, black, gold and white, and by the use of libation and drums. Features of these rituals are appearing increasingly in Christian funerals. The Rastafari minister interviewed in this study said he was experiencing difficulty responding to the demand from families who desire religious, but not Christian death rituals, and are attracted to the Africa centric nature of the Rastafari

rituals. ‘Jamaicans are not rejecting God’ he said, ‘they are connecting more with a way of doing things that reflect more of who they are. They want that connection with the ancestors. They want the drums’.

He claimed Rastafari had influenced wearing brighter colours at funerals in Jamaica, but the evidence is that the trend to brighter colours had been occurring in the UK and the USA with a transformation of the meaning of the ritual from one of mourning to one of celebration, which is also Rastafari’s meaning. However, at some of the funerals I attended in the UK many people wore bright African printed fabrics which were not in evidence in Jamaica. It is therefore likely that the influence is stronger in the UK. These differences between the diaspora and the homeland are a reflection of the different threats to cultural and national identity perceived by Jamaicans in the diaspora and in the homeland.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the major influences of the changes to Jamaican death rituals and the processes that have been facilitating the transformations. Acculturation is presented as the overarching process within which the others influences and processes fit. The chapter outlines the consequences of failure to teach the customs to young people, increased affluence, technology, the medicalisation and professionalisation of death and the influence of funeral directors, changing values and changing religious beliefs on the rituals.

The chapter concludes that the practical changes are the result of the intangible changes in values and religious beliefs. In particular it discusses the Government’s attempts to reposition the nation from an *ethnie* to a civic one which has placed

Jamaicans in a position of liminality, a space in which old values, beliefs and identities are broken down and the new ones have not yet been established. The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic added another layer of crisis to the death rituals resulting in an escalation of the changes to some rituals including cremations which saw a 30% increase in Jamaica.

The future of the rituals, that is, how Jamaica emerges from this liminality, is discussed in the following chapter by addressing the consequences of the changes in terms of extinct, endangered and extant rituals, and interviewees' responses to the question 'what can be done to preserve the heritage?'.

CHAPTER 7

CAN THE RITUALS BE PRESERVED?

7.1 Introduction

This, the final of the analysis chapters, explores in greater detail the consequences of the transformation in terms of the rituals that, according to the data of this study, have become extinct, those that are at risk of becoming extinct, and the new rituals being created. It identifies the rituals that are still extant and valued and presents the interviewees' suggestions for preserving them. The chapter uses data gathered via the questionnaire, interviews, ethnographic observations and relevant literature and is presented in four sections. Section 7.2 looks at the rituals that have become extinct, those nearing extinction and those that are still extant and the new rituals that are being created, while section 7.3 deals with the question of whether it is desirable to preserve the rituals as heritage and if so how. Section 7.4 is the chapter's conclusion.

7.2 Rituals that are extinct, nearing extinction, and still extant

Rituals become extinct principally because they are not practised (UNESCO, 2003; Smith, 2006; Stefano et al, 2012; Bigambo, 2019). Table 7.1 shows the rituals that were spoken of by the interviewees but were neither practised by them or by anyone known to them, and no other evidence located by this study indicated them to be currently practised. According to the data of this study these rituals are therefore

extinct in both Jamaica and the UK. The table also shows that from the categorisation of the rituals as outlined in Chapter 5, most of the rituals that are no longer practised fall within the 'protective' category, that is, those intended either to protect the bereaved from the deceased, or the deceased's spirit from obeah practitioners.

Table 7.1 Rituals already extinct in both locations

Rituals already extinct in both locations	**In the UK**	**In Jamaica**	**Category of ritual**
All water in the house in containers thrown out	Yes	Yes	P
Children sleep with the deceased	Yes	Yes	P
Wrapping the body in a white sheet after removing clothes	Yes	Yes	G
Women wearing panties inside out after the death of their partner	Yes	Yes	P
Women wearing tape measure around their waist when their partner dies	Yes	Yes	P
Men wearing black underwear after their partner's death	Yes	Yes	P
Hanging tape measures above a baby's cot	Yes	Yes	P
Bringing the coffin to the house the night before the funeral	Yes	Yes	P
Spinning the coffin around on the way to the funeral	Yes	Yes	P
Walking backwards from funerals	Yes	Yes	P

G = Assisting in the grieving process P = Protective

Reasons for the demise of the rituals are addressed alongside those that are at risk of extinction as they share common features. Table 7.2 below outlines the rituals at risk of extinction.

Table 7.2 Rituals nearing extinction

Rituals nearing extinction	In the UK	In Jamaica	Category of ritual
Placing beans in the pockets of the deceased before burial	Yes	Yes	P
Covering the mirrors in the house	Yes	Yes	P
Turning photos around	Yes	Yes	P
Sewing up the pockets in men's suits	Yes	Yes	P
Cutting out pockets in men's trousers	Yes	Yes	P
Putting coins on the eyes of the deceased	Yes	Yes	P
Wearing items of clothing inside out	Yes	Yes	P
Placing a tape measure over the door	Yes	Yes	P
Placing a left shoe at a closed door	Yes	Yes	P
Wearing purple at funerals	Yes	Yes	G
Gerreh dancers	Was never practised	Yes	G
Tying red ribbon on children	Yes	Yes	P
Women not attending funerals when pregnant	Yes	Yes	P
The duppy table at the nine-night	Yes	Yes	G

G = Assisting in the grieving process P = Protective

The rituals that are nearing extinction due to their infrequent practise are also mainly protective, with a few whose purpose is to facilitate the grieving process. Many of the younger interviewees were unaware of still extant rituals such as passing children over coffins, women putting vaginal hair in the coffin of a spouse or sexual partner, rearranging the furniture in the house/room after someone dies, and burning the bedclothes on which someone died because they have never seen or heard of them being practised. However, older interviewees were aware of the rituals still being carried out. This may well be accounted for by the wish to shield children from the 'superstitious' rituals. Two rituals, which are only practised in the Kumina community,

fall within the category of assisting the journey of the deceased's spirit, and include dancing for 40 days after the death, and dancing around a fire at the nine-night.

Given the closeness of the relationship between the UK diaspora and the Jamaican homeland, and the mutual influences they exert on each other, it is not surprising that the death rituals have evolved in a similar manner in both locations, i.e. the same rituals are extinct or at risk of extinction in both places. Thomson (2009 p146) posits that 'a dwindling belief in an afterlife' and 'the consideration that we might join our loved ones in heaven' were the main causes of the demise of the protective rituals. This study only partly concurs with his suggestions because for the 21.3 % of interviewees who said they have no religion there was no expectation of a heavenly reunion. However, it is not solely a dwindling belief in the afterlife, which of course includes heaven, that is influencing the changes to the protective rituals. Many respondents still believe in an afterlife, and in their deceased relatives' involvement in their lives. The difference is that the deceased ancestors are no longer seen as grim reapers from whom they need to be protected, but as benign guardians with their best interest at heart. This is reflected in increasing acknowledgement of African ancestry and the ancestors in Jamaica, UK and US Black communities.

Where transformations to the rituals have been made due to technology such as refrigeration, or for legal or practical reasons, there is more acceptance of the changes. The concerns being expressed by the interviewees and the wider community in both locations are primarily related to changes in values and religious beliefs as discussed in Chapter 6.

Rituals that remain extant. Despite the large number of death rituals that have become extinct or are at risk of becoming so, there is a wide range of rituals

associated with the process of death and disposal of the body that are still practised by Jamaicans. These are shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Rituals that are still extant

Rituals that are still extant	**In the UK**	**In Jamaica**	**Category of ritual**
Helping family with cash or kind for funeral expenses	Yes	Yes	G/S
Tie red ribbon on children	Yes	Yes	P
Rearranging the furniture in the house	Yes	Yes	P
Burning all the bedclothes on which, the deceased died	No	Yes	P
Communal grave-digging	Was never practised	Yes	G/S
40 nights of dancing (Kumina only)	No	Yes	G/S
Nine-night	Yes	Yes	G/S
Dancing around fire at nine-night (Kumina only)	No	Yes	G/S
Dance around a fire at nine-night while drinking rum	Was never practised	Yes	G/S
Set-up	Yes	Yes	G
Placing vaginal hair in partner's hand	No	Yes	P
Funerals	Yes	Yes	G/S
Placing items in the coffin/casket of the deceased	Yes	Yes	P
Passing children over the coffin	No	Yes	P
Coffin/casket carried feet first into and out of buildings	Yes	Yes	P
Opening the coffin/casket to view the body at funerals	Yes	Yes	G/S
Wearing black and white at funerals	Yes	Yes	G/S
Burial	Yes	Yes	G/S
Family and friends fill in the grave	Yes	No	G/S
Reception/repass	Yes	Yes	G/S

G = Assisting with grieving   P= Protection   G/S = Grieving/social

The table illustrates the consistency of death ritual practice between Jamaica and the UK diaspora with eight exceptions, seven ritual practices being current in Jamaica but not in the UK, while one is current in the UK and not in Jamaica.

Passing children over coffins as shown in Fig 7.1 is either performed privately or publicly. It is the only ritual that provides protection to both the deceased and the bereaved. The children are protected from molestation by the spirit of the deceased

and the deceased is afforded protection from obeah practitioners as Brailsford (2008 p53) explains

> The children, preferably babies, are passed over the casket containing the corpse by relatives and friends, who recite the names of the children out loud. This will hold the duppy in its coffin. Omission of this ritual also makes the ghost a target for the Obeah practitioners, who seek to wield power over the spirit and use it for mischief against the chosen living.

Although the practice was known by the older interviewees in the UK it is never performed, or admitted to being performed in the UK for a number of reasons. Firstly, belief in the effectiveness of obeah is less prevalent among Jamaicans in the UK. Secondly, the UK laws are such that engaging children in these rituals would trigger child protection intervention. There is particular sensitivity around participation of children in rituals of this kind in the UK following high-profile media coverage of children thought to be involved in satanic ritual abuse dying during the rituals (Murray, 2014; Goddard, 2016). In Jamaica the practice is more widely known and used. Practitioners fall into two groups; those who believe in the protection offered by the ritual, and those who are not sure but prefer to err on the side of caution.

Fig: 7.1 Passing a baby over a coffin in Jamaica. Source: Tortello (2006)

Communal grave digging is widely practised in Jamaica as an event but not in the UK due to UK regulations that prescribe the role solely to cemetery employees where the deceased is buried in a cemetery. Of course, these regulations do not apply if the deceased is buried on private grounds, including one's garden, but there is no evidence of this being used by Jamaicans in the UK. There is, however, an increasing requirement from private cemeteries in Jamaica for their employees to dig the grave unattended by the ritual music, food and well-wishers to minimise costs, as the grave is included in most funeral packages. This is not a requirement in public cemeteries where the family is responsible for funding the grave.

Placing vaginal hair in the hand or coffin of a deceased sexual partner or spouse is still used in Jamaica but no-one admitted to this practice in the UK. A likely reason for the more widespread admission of use in Jamaica is the greater risk of women being killed in Jamaica for sexual infidelity than in the UK (Patterson, 2020). Thus, for women in Jamaica appeasing a deceased sexual partner so that a new living partner

is not viewed as infidelity is a precautionary measure. It is interesting that the other sexually protective rituals of wearing red or black underwear is not practised, or at least not admitted to, maybe because it is considered less potent.

Rearranging the furniture in the house after a person has died and *burning the bedding on which, they died* are two practices that are still extant in Jamaica but rarely practised in the UK diaspora. Rearrangement of the furniture is nowadays restricted to the room in which the person died, often the bedroom rather than the entire house. This ritual is closely related to that of burning the bedclothes on which the deceased died. The reasons for the former are based solely on the belief that a rearranged space will confuse the returning spirit of the deceased and discourage it from lingering. For the latter, legal restrictions in the form of the Clean Air Act 1993 in the UK which prohibit burning certain materials outside is a contributory factor. In the UK the bedclothes are simply disposed of in the garbage or donated to charities. The main point here is that the ritual is more widely practised in Jamaica.

Kumina rituals of dancing for 40 days and *dancing around a fire at the nine-night* are not practised in the UK according to the interviewees and the ethnographic observations. Thompson (2009 p149-150) provides a detailed description of his visit to a Kumina nine-night where he witnessed the ritual of dancing around the fire.

> They started a slow, counter-clockwise shuffle, the jerky movement of their arms oddly resembling those of a ska dance routine. Alternately bending forward and straightening up in rhythmic sequence, the dancers took an intake of breath, and released it with a James Brown-like 'huh'. Revivalists call this form of respiration 'trumping' – a form of hyperventilation. The percussionists with their chattering beat kept the dancers in a continuous whirl, until cheekbones and foreheads took on a polish of sweat.

There are insufficient numbers of the Kumina group in the UK for this ritual to have been practised to any extent.

Filling in the grave at the burial. A practice that is still very much extant in the UK but is almost extinct in Jamaica is that of family and friends filling in the grave after the coffin or casket has been lowered. See Fig 7.2. Despite official attempts to prohibit its practise on health and safety grounds, the Jamaican community has resisted this on the grounds of cultural heritage. However, in Jamaica the practice is almost extinct due to the transition of burying the deceased in vaults or sepulchres which do not require the ground being filled in. It is obvious that differing laws lead to changes in practices but so too can acculturation to the host nation as discussed in Chapter 6.

Fig 7.2 Family filling in the grave at a burial in the UK Source: Researcher's image

As some rituals diminish in use new ones are being devised or incorporated to reflect changing beliefs about death and to meet the spiritual, psychological and social needs of Jamaican communities in both locations. These are discussed in the following section.

Introducing new rituals into Jamaican death process. The introduction of new rituals reinforces the view that death rituals have an important role in cultural and national identity, and can be seen as heritage in the making, reflecting Halls' observations that 'traditions coexist with the emergence of new, hybrid and crossover cultural forms of tremendous vitality and innovation' (Hall, 1999 p9).

One such introduction in Jamaica is the candle light service which can occur on the 9th night after the death, or on another night of the organiser's choosing. This is a ritual thought by some of the interviewees to have its origins in North America. Increased use of cremations with the accompanying burying, scattering or storage of ashes is simultaneously being utilised in both places, as is the use of memorial services instead of, or in addition to, funerals, particularly where disposal of the body was by cremation. In the UK the grave party was a family's memorial response in a very individual way. These new rituals, as shown in Table 7.5 fulfil either psychological or social functions. However, the protective function is not being re-created.

Table 7.4 Newly introduced rituals

Newly created rituals	In the UK	In Jamaica	Category of ritual
Neighbours keeping curtains closed till after the funeral	Yes	No	G/S
Casket driven past places of deceased's hobbies	Yes	No	G/S
Candle light service on 9th night after death	No	Yes	G/P
Cremation and burying/scattering/storage of ashes	Yes	Yes	G/S
Memorial services	Yes	Yes	G/S
Grave party	Yes	No	G/P
Placing single stem of flowers into the grave	Yes	Yes	G/P
Hired duppy bands to play at nine-night	No	Yes	G/S

G/P = Assisting in grieving/Psychological G/S= Assisting in grieving/Social

With the increasing use of photographs, video recordings and live streaming of events it will be interesting to see whether the same newly created rituals are adopted in each location, further reinforcing the one-nation, one family analogy claims of the Jamaican Government.

Despite the extinction or threat of extinction of some rituals, and the introduction of new ones, there are practices which are widely considered by the interviewees to be essential to the death process, and which are therefore least at risk of extinction. These include funerals, burials, nine-night, respect for the deceased, opening the coffin to view the body at funerals, wearing appropriate clothes and the set-up. The degree of their importance is outlined in Table 7.6.

Table 7.5 Most important customs and practices to be observed

Customs and practices	UK male	UK female	Jamaica male	Jamaica female	Total
Funerals	9	6	2	6	23
Burials	3	6	3	7	19
Nine-night	2	5	5	4	16
Respect for the deceased	4	11	1	1	17
Opening the coffin to view at funerals	8	2	3	2	10
Wearing appropriate clothes	4	2	1	1	8
Set-up	-	2	4	-	6

Table 7.5 is the summary of the responses to the question 'What do you believe are the most important customs and practices to be observed when someone dies?' With the exception of 'respect for the deceased', which is a value rather than a ritual, the most important rituals are the public ones of funeral, burial, nine-night, and opening the coffin to view the body at funerals. There is a great deal of similarity between the two locations with two exceptions. The first is the ritual of opening the coffin to view the body at the funeral which is seen as more important in Jamaica than in the UK diaspora. This is likely to be the influence of the UK culture where the coffin remains closed at funerals, and as more Jamaicans attend British funerals of friends, colleagues or family by marriage where this is not the custom, they are not all viewing it as important. As discussed in Chapter 6, some Jamaicans are specifying in their funeral plans that they wish to dispense with this aspect of the funeral and be remembered by a younger or happier photograph, which may well entail an element of vanity. Opening the coffin was prohibited during the Covid-19 pandemic due to concerns that the virus could be transmitted from the corpse to attendees. This, coupled with not being able to see the deceased at the funeral home prior to the

funeral, was a cause of great concern for some Jamaicans who said they were unable to verify the bodies in the coffin. One bereaved lady expressed her anger at not being able to see the body before the burial.

> It's not right. They could have let even one of the family in to see the body. My question is, how do we, the family know that is our relative in that box? How can we be sure when nobody will let us see inside?' (Female aged 58 UK).

Although this issue was not exclusive to Jamaicans the lady's complaints about the coffin not being opened to relatives is a pointer to another change within the funeral ritual. That of the casket not being open to the congregation but only to the family. This is done prior to, during or after the congregation leaving the church. The latter is indicative of a transition of the ritual from a public to a private one.

The second relates to a difference in gender perceptions of importance. 75% more males than females believe that opening the coffin is an important part of the ritual. The data does not give clear reasons for this but highlights that a ritual that males consider important is declining which supports observations of the marginalisation of male roles in the rituals and the possible consequences for this as discussed in Chapter 6. It is also noteworthy that 60% more females than males believe respect for the deceased is an important custom, and almost exclusively in the UK. This may well be another effect of acculturation where, increasingly, individuals are making their wishes for their death rituals known, whereas in Jamaica it is still largely decided by the family.

The study aimed to ascertain how these important rituals, and the ones perceived to be at risk of extinction could or should be preserved. The following section uses the interviewees' responses to the final question of the interview: 'What, if anything, can

be done to preserve this heritage?' Their suggestions for preservation are presented in Table 7.7 followed by discussions of the likely effectiveness of their solutions.

7.3 What can be done to preserve death ritual heritage?

The table presents the eight most popular suggestions for preserving the rituals with no distinction between male and female responses as they were both similar.

Table 7.6 What can be done to preserve heritage?

Suggestions made	**UK**	**Jamaica**	**Total**
Do nothing/can't see a solution/don't know	4	8	12
Elders to teach the next generation	8	3	11
Record it in writing, orally, in photographs	8	1	9
Better education	5	2	7
Involve children in the customs	3	1	4
Take children to Jamaica to observe the customs	4	-	4
Public forums and workshops	2	-	2
Allow organic change	1	1	2

7.3.1 Do nothing/can't see a solution/don't know

Twelve of the interviewees (25%), mostly from the Jamaica cohort, said nothing could or should be done to prevent the changes. While half of this group despaired at the loss of heritage, the others accepted the inevitability of change with one pointing out the right of the younger generation to assert their mark on the culture of the nation.

> I don't really see what would be there to draw it back and preserve it, because the younger generations will just continue to pick up on what they've seen and continue to build on that. So I really can't see a solution on how to preserve it (Male aged 49 Jamaica).

> I would imagine that when these set of young people grow up, I would imagine there will be new customs, because we as a people, we always evolve. We're trendsetters (Male aged 59 Jamaica).

The trendsetting claim of the last interviewee goes some way in explaining why Jamaicans in the homeland are less concerned about the inevitability of change, drawing as they do on evidence that Jamaicans are able to syncretise different forms of culture to create something uniquely Jamaican, such as reggae, which is then exported to the wider world. In response to the question *Why does globalization not produce cultural homogenization?* Patterson demonstrates, in relation to reggae, how 'the complexity of the interactions between local and foreign influences…generate the global culture' (Patterson, 2019 p263). There is therefore an apparent confidence in the evolution of the rituals in Jamaica that is not shared with such readiness in the UK, which is a likely result of the more marginalised position of the Jamaican diaspora in areas including education, justice, health and housing (Vassel, 2002; Firth, 2005; Full Fact, 2016; Serrant, 2020; Shelter, 2020).

While the study tried to ascertain which of the rituals the interviewees thought were most important to be kept, it did not try to determine whether rituals that were already extinct or nearing so should be revived. As one interviewee asked: 'preserve the heritage from when?' (Male aged 60 Jamaica). By using oral history to collect the data on how the rituals were previously performed, the study is de facto concerned with the interviewees' living memory. With the oldest being 98 years and the youngest 21 years, the timespan being considered is 80 years. However, even among the older interviewees no one seemed to want to hark back to the days of keeping bodies at home on ice to enable burial to take place within three days in hastily constructed coffins and quickly stitched shrouds. Interviewees were generally

accepting of the technological changes that have made it possible to keep the body until a convenient burial time. That changes to cultural and ritual practices are inevitable is acknowledged (Bell, 1997; Hall, 1999), not just by scholars but also by UNESCO in its definition of ICH: ‘This intangible heritage, transmitted from generation to generation is constantly re-created by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interactions with nature and their history’ (UNESCO, 2003: Article 2). Hall (1999), notes not only the inevitability of change, particularly in diasporic communities, but also the process by which it is effected:

> Some traditional cultural practices are maintained – in varied ways and carry respect. At the same time, degrees and forms of attachments are fluid and changing – constantly negotiated, especially between men and women, within and across groups, and above all, across the generations. Traditional co-exist with the emergence of new, hybrid and cross over cultural forms of tremendous vitality and innovation (Hall, 1999, p9).

Part of this negotiation must be about what to keep and what to change, and how best to retain the meaning of the ritual while the form and expression changes. The ritual that is being most extensively re-negotiated in both Jamaica and the UK is the nine-night. For instance, some believe that the nine-night should be dispensed with, while others believe it is essential to retain it. Here an interviewee explains why she believes the nine-night no longer serves the function of reminiscing about the deceased, that the ritual has lost its meaning.

> There was a nine-night in my area and the way I heard most of the family outside say that they’ve never seen that person [i.e. the deceased] before, they’ve come in there [to the venue] they’ve taken their [the bereaved’s] drinks, they’ve gone out, they’ve done this. It seems like a disrespect to the person who’s actually held the nine-night. So that’s why I have a bit of a negative on the nine-night (Female aged 37 UK).

Conversely, others believe it is still essential:

> People still gather at the house from the moment the person has passed, that still continues. When I was younger people would come to the house and it was very sad and very mournful. People would arrive at the house and would sit quietly and think of the person and you could hear sobbing and crying, and as children, that was really sad. As I've grown older and you go to people's yards, homes, houses, it doesn't seem like that. It's like a party. People come in with their drinks, there's music playing. People are coming and it's a gathering, talking about the individual, but also it's about remembering special moments with family and friends that they haven't seen for a long time, 'cause obviously in death it draws in a lot of people, it's time to reflect. There tend to be music playing, TV's on, children running up and down (Female aged 57, UK).

The younger woman's understanding of the ritual of nine-night is one of remembering the deceased and supporting the family. She therefore assumed that the attendees should have known the deceased in order to attend the event. However, public rituals are community events where the attendees may not have known the deceased, but may know members of the family, or may only have seen the deceased in the community. In addition, many nine-nights are publicised via social media and occasionally on local radio stations which make them accessible to anyone in the community. The second point of the young woman's complaint was that the individuals partook of the drinks provided by the family despite not knowing the deceased which to her seemed unfair. These individuals were not reminiscing about the deceased, but as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 many Jamaicans still measure the depth of love and respect for the deceased by the number of attendees at the public rituals. To the family the very presence of the two people the young woman complained about could have been sufficient. What has not been adequately transmitted to her are the meanings of the different aspects of the ritual. The older woman had a more nuanced understanding of nine-nights and could appreciate that the transformed expression still retains the meaning.

This is an illustration of Hall's observations of the fluidity of attachments to cultural practices and the way they are being negotiated across the generations. Both interviewees' viewpoints are formed by the changes they have observed. The first perceives the behaviour of the attendees negatively and therefore views the ritual negatively. The effectiveness of rituals is that there is consistency in their performance and that they are symbolic of wider meanings. When they lose their consistency, or their symbolism is lost, they will cease to be practised (Bell 1997). The second and older interviewee, with more understanding of the purpose and meaning of the ritual, is better able to accommodate the changes to the ritual and therefore views the changes more positively.

Another feature of the nine-night that is being renegotiated is the number of days that the bereaved family is expected to provide a space for visitors to gather and to express their condolences. Traditionally, as discussed in Chapter 5, the family kept 'open house' for nine consecutive nights after the death which ended in a big celebration on the ninth night. Within this period the deceased would already have been buried and the nine-night ritual marked the end of the official mourning period and a return of the family to normal life, the reintegration phase of the ritual process as outlined by van Gennep (1960). The extension of the liminal time between death and burial resulted in blurring of the meaning of the ritual and the process, particularly in the UK, but also to some extent in Jamaica, and increasingly the *gathering* at the deceased home is referred to as nine-night. There were some interviewees and members of the community who complained that the gatherings have become no more than an excuse for a week-long party which the family is expected to fund as attendees no longer make contributions of food and drink. They hanker nostalgically for the more mournful event described by the older interviewee.

While this may be true in some cases the observations made by this research was that some attendees contributed alcohol to the events.

The other issue of meaning relates to the purpose Jamaicans perceive the ritual of nine-night to fulfil. Those for whom the spiritual meaning of the ritual is paramount perceive the current format of a party as too secular, or in Durkheimian terms, too profane. They will either dispense with the ritual, focusing instead on the set-up the night before the funeral, or opt for the small religious based version. Others for whom the psychological meaning is more important will find a wider range of expression of the ritual acceptable, an example being the extremely well-attended nine-night described in Chapter 5 of a gentleman who had died as a result of suicide. Although I admitted to his wife that I had not known her husband she said she was grateful for the support of so many members of the community in the time of the family's personal grief. For others, such as the Rastafari nine-night, also described in Chapter 5, community cohesion was a major consideration, particularly because the deceased had been killed in a hit-and-run accident and the community wanted to register a protest as well as to support the family emotionally.

While the discourse of nine-night continues to seek clarity about its meaning and practise, the dominant view remains in favour of the ritual in both locations. Despite the concerns and controversies about the ritual in Jamaica, and its transformation from a sacred ritual to 'a curry goat feed' (Gouldson, 2020 n/p) it was still deemed by the interviewees to be one of the most important rituals to be performed for the deceased. With regard to whether there should be intervention to preserve the traditional meaning and practice of the ritual the Jamaican cohort were twice as likely to accept letting the practice transform, that is, to do nothing. One reason is the recognition that the process from death to burial has been so significantly delayed

that it is not always possible or practical to conduct the ritual in its original form. Another is the notion that the ritual will evolve into something innovatively Jamaican to meet current Jamaican needs. In the UK, on the other hand, the fear is that the loss of something Jamaican is likely to be replaced by something of a different culture. Jamaicans in Jamaica are not as outwardly demonstrative of their national identity with regard to heritage as their UK counterparts. The conscious use of Jamaican national symbols such as the flag and the Rastafari colours were not observed in the rituals in the homeland but are prominently displayed in the UK in floral tributes (see Fig 7.3), incorporated into order of service programmes, in the plumage of horses, and in the decorations of venues, (see Fig 5.16).

Fig 7.3 Jamaican flag floral tribute. Source: Researcher's image

The need to assert one's national identity symbolically is perhaps reflective of the confusion of the meanings of the rituals felt by some Jamaicans in the UK, but also expressive of a more generalised fear of 'disappearing' culturally as a group in the host nation. For a number of older Jamaicans in the UK the generalised fear was

crystallised into deportation from the UK which brought into sharp focus not just their cultural identity but also their national identity, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The second most popular suggestion was for the elders to teach the rituals to the younger generations.

7.3.2 Elders to teach the next generation

Eleven (22%) of the interviewees said the route to preservation lay with the elders in the communities. It is their role and duty to teach the rituals to the next generation, the most obvious and effective means of passing on culture, particularly in diasporic communities. Brinkerhoff (2015) in her study of the Coptic diaspora in the US, agrees with these interviewees that the responsibility for maintaining the culture lies with the elders. Nearly twice as many Jamaicans in the UK saw this as the preferred solution: eight in the UK, and three in Jamaica.

An important factor relating to the role of the elders is the question of who the 'elders' are. To a twenty-five-year-old a 50 or 60-year-old is an elder, but, as the data in Chapter 6 shows it is within this age group that decisions about relinquishing religion are being made with consequential diminishing knowledge of the rituals. It is this age group that shoulder increasing responsibility for arranging the death rituals of their older, dying relatives. Jamaicans over the age of 70 years are the ones with demonstratively more Christian religious beliefs, and are more resistant to admitting that they engage in the more African centric rituals, espousing them to be either primitive, superstitious or both. Here a tension exists between one group of older people resisting changes and another actively aiding and abetting them, the latter

increasingly including African symbols and practices into the rituals as shown in Fig. 7.4 where the African ankh has been incorporated into a floral tribute.

Without sufficient numbers of the older people who see the private rituals as Jamaican heritage rather than African witchcraft, and who are willing to engage with the younger people to explain the meanings of the rituals, there is little hope that these practices will survive. Even if they were willing to teach the rituals many of these older people are often at the end of their economic influence within the family and not in a position to enforce adherence to the rituals because of their reliance on younger members of the family for carrying them out. In Jamaica these may well be the younger relatives who have come from abroad bringing some of the ways of the largest diasporas of the US, the UK and Canada, or those tasked by the government to forge the way for Jamaica becoming a developed nation.

Fig 7.4 The ankh in floral tribute. Source: Researcher's image

If this option is to be effective older members of the community should be encouraged to share their knowledge. This could be incorporated into a wider effort to place more value on the knowledge and expertise of the elders, especially in the UK where devaluing the contribution of older people in the wider British society is being adopted by the Jamaican community, via the process of acculturation. The older interviewees who participated in this study said they felt valued for their contribution to the research, and had not considered that the knowledge they possessed would be of interest to anyone else. This is an important point because as Hall (1999 p12) observes,

> Unless the younger generation has access to those cultural repertoires and can understand and practice them, to some extent at least from the inside, they will lack the resources – the cultural capital – of their own 'heritage', as a base from which to engage with other traditions.

Here there are echoes of Marcus Garvey's widely quoted assertion that 'a people without knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots' (Global Glimpse, 2015).

There is a direct correlation between the elders teaching the rituals and the third suggestion for preservation, particularly in relation to the oral history of the older Jamaicans.

7.3.3 Record it in writing, orally, in photographs

Nine (18%) of the interviewees believe that recording the customs and practices and their meanings will be helpful.

Younger interviewees believe it will be informative,

> I think it's about outlining what things are, instead of everyone being on their own with their own understanding of how things used to be back in the day. Because every year, well, every decade we evolve and we forget things, don't we? So yeah. It's just like a recap of why we did things so if we were to start the tradition again it would be an outline of why we're doing it (Female aged 37 UK).

This interviewee demonstrates not only a desire to understand the current contextual meaning of the rituals, but anticipates a recreation of them at some future point should they become extinct, while older interviewees believe they should be recorded for posterity.

> I don't know that anything has been written down because there is no script, there is no script that these are the things to follow. So, there must be some capturing of the things we did originally, the reason why we were doing it. Where did those customs and practices come from? Some of it is around why do we need to do it now? But if we don't have a manual to direct those tradition, then I don't see how we can hold on to them or go back to them if we don't know the reason, the purpose for having them (Female aged 62 UK).

One of the arguments against recording cultural rituals in a prescribed manner is the risk of reification which would be in direct contradiction to the fluidity and re-interpretation suggested by Hall (1999). African cultures, the Ancient Egyptian culture excepted, are traditionally oral cultures whose rituals are transmitted by the elders. The fragmentation of communities due to internal and international migration means that Jamaica is now a global nation, less bounded and hence more imagined than suggested by Anderson (1983, 2016), as its members do not reside within the same borders. The suggestion for formal recording of the rituals is a recognition that the old forms of transmission are no longer capable of transmitting meaning or performance of them effectively.

The interviewees who suggested this option agree that writing them down will not in and of itself help to keep the practices alive. In addition, according to four (8%) interviewees, the older generation must discuss the practices with their children and grandchildren, and involve them as much as possible in the customs with explanations of their meanings and purposes.

There is evidence that writing down rituals preserves them in a reproducible form and that this is valued in some sectors, for example the funeral liturgy of older Christian denominations. The Catholic funeral mass, which is written in a prescribed format, is performed in a consistent manner in both locations. Conversely, in the Pentecostal funerals which were not similarly constrained, the largest number of variations was

observed. While the structure of the ritual was consistent, the content varied widely. The reluctance to commit the practices to writing has its roots in Jamaica's history. It was not possible to record the rituals in writing or any other physical form during slavery for two main reasons. Firstly, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the Africans brought to Jamaica were not from a homogenous group sharing the same practices, and secondly, African practices were either suppressed or, in the case of the nine-night, outlawed (Thomson, 2009 p147). Many Jamaicans, even after becoming literate in English, were therefore reluctant to commit the practices to writing. The suggestion for heritage to be preserved in writing and photographic media as well as orally is an acknowledgement that the prolonged distance of the UK diaspora from the homeland, and the urban dwellers from the rural areas in Jamaica where the practices are maintained in their purest form, makes the old forms of transmission ineffective. There is also increasing trust in the UK in the efficacy of these media where eight of the nine suggestions for using this mode are located. Photographic publications such as Vanley Burke's (2012) *By the rivers of Birmingham*, Paul Gilroy's (2007; 2011) *Black Britain: A photographic history*, and Charlie Phillips' (2014) *How great thou art,* have provided documented accounts of the culture of Jamaicans generally, and of the death rituals specifically.

In Jamaica there has been more emphasis on museums and tangible heritage as discussed in Chapter 3. Intangible heritage such as death rituals, occurring as part of the living fabric of the nation, is captured in newspapers such as the ones cited in this study (Williams, 2015; Gouldson, 2020), in radio discussions, and in television programmes.

Oral history, which is an established technique for capturing histories of communities in their own words and from their own perspectives, and which was used successfully

by Hazel Ramsay and Olive Lewin, founder of the Jamaica Folk Singers, as part of a UNESCO funded project in many communities in Jamaica, was only considered an effective means of preserving heritage by one of the interviewees in Jamaica.

The difference between the two cohorts is due in part to Jamaicans in the UK having become accustomed to learning about their culture and heritage through the arts, that is, in writing, visual art, theatre, film and so on. Charlie William's photographic exhibition of funerals at The National Theatre (2018), and Natasha Gordon's play *Nine Night (2018)* are examples of this. Jamaicans in Jamaica, conversely, learn primarily though the lived experience and many would not think to look for their culture elsewhere, as noted earlier with the suggestion for older people teaching the rituals. Although some attempts have been made by the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica and the Jamaica Folk Singers to perform the ritual of nine-night for educational purposes, this was not regularised or accessible to everyone in Jamaica. In a recent study of the transmission of rituals as intangible cultural heritage in Tanzania, Bigambo (2019) noted that the main cause of extinction of traditional rituals, including death rituals, was the lack of use by the older members of the communities. For some of the Jamaican cohort, it was not simply a matter of whether the rituals were becoming extinct, but whether their replacements were helpful or unhelpful in terms of maintaining heritage and important values. One interviewee described it thus:

> These things [the old rituals] have helped to make us think positively about ourselves. This has helped us to recognise that we are a people with a great tradition. The new things are not helping us to be more caring about each other (Female aged 64 Jamaica).

The rituals are not always readily thought about in terms of loss of heritage or national identity. Jamaicans in the homeland view themselves as the embodiment of

culture. It is their ‘Jamaicaness’ that is their culture, ‘the way we do things’, not so much the way they have always been done. It was interesting that the form of recording that is likely to be most effective in perpetuating the rituals was not suggested by any of the interviewees, that of video recording, particularly as it plays such a significant role in the process of ritual transformation by facilitating the cross fertilisation of practices between Jamaica and the diaspora, as noted by one of the ministers:

> Also, the video thing. That really plays a big part. People ask me to do a service because they saw it on a video. So, something about what I’m doing people are liking. Half of my work comes from people seeing other funerals I’ve done on video (Male aged 58 UK).

Video recordings are in effect enabling individual Jamaicans to become archivists, transmitters of the rituals, and creators of new ones. The role of video recording was given significant prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic as discussed in Chapter 6 when the numbers who could attend the rituals were severely restricted, and the recordings, either live-streamed or posted later on different platforms were the only means by which family, friends and community members could share in the rituals. Recordings at the events have, however, also become one of the agents of transformation. Ritual ceremonies now include pauses for photographs similar to those at weddings, and some attendees now address the camera rather than the congregation at funerals. Video recording is influencing the expression of grief. One family member at a funeral said she would have liked to have given a tribute but didn’t want to be caught on camera crying and for people all over the world to see it. Without careful attention to this, there may be a time when the content of the rituals will be chosen for their effectiveness on camera, rather than for the spiritual, psychological or social support of the bereaved. Jamaican death rituals are in danger

of becoming performances of grief rather than expressions of grief, and may therefore cease to fulfil their psychological healing function.

7.3.4 Better education

Seven (14%) of the interviewees believed that education is the answer. By education they mean talking about the rituals, explaining the meanings, and imparting an understanding of their importance. Education was preferred by twice as many interviewees in Jamaica as those who favoured recording it as shown in Fig 7.7, but it was still significantly fewer than the UK interviewees for whom it was considered an ideal option, another example of diasporic differences.

Table 7.7 Better education to preserve heritage

What can be done to preserve heritage?	UK	Jamaica	Total
Better education	5	2	7

One of the interviewees in Jamaica thought it was the government's responsibility to educate the younger generation,

> I think what they should do you know is… the government… The first thing they should do is build up a class to train those young people and tell them the things that they supposed to do to keep this heritage going. If we've changed so many things in twenty years, what's going to happen in the next fifty years? The cultural heritage people [i.e. the Jamaica National Heritage Trust] should advertise it on TV to enlighten the younger set of people (Male aged 64 Jamaica).

while others, such as the young man below believes it is the responsibility of the family and the community.

> I do definitely feel like heritage like that should be preserved, should be taught in the correct manner because me as a young Black male I'm in an

> environment where I have been taught about certain things and I respect them highly. I understand where I'm coming from and certain values and customs that have been placed on me and around me, so I do see the importance of it (Male 21 UK).

The difference between the two locations is essentially one of responsibility for ensuing the transmission of the rituals. The Jamaican diasporic communities do not generally rely on the host nation for education about their heritage. Their main demands of the UK government have been for accurate representations and narratives of the historic interactions with, and contributions to the host nations (John, 1972, 2014; Perry, 2019) while they have assumed the responsibility for transmitting the rituals through churches and other social networks. In Jamaica the JNHT plays a very active role in national heritage events such as Heroes Day, and have supported historical programmes for television of Jamaica's past. They are a small department with a wide brief and it is unlikely that promoting death rituals will be given priority given that much of their work is centred around heritage that tourists will find interesting (Griffith and Emmanuele, 2005).

7.3.5. Involve children in the rituals

Four interviewees, three in the UK and one in Jamaica believed better education should include involving children in the rituals, instructing them, and allowing them to participate in age-appropriate ways. While experiential learning was recognised as the most effective way of transmitting culture, it was interesting that even those advocating this did not perceive a personal responsibility. One of the outcomes of this research is that it helped to highlight personal responsibility to many of the interviewees as the two examples below demonstrate.

During a discussion at a funeral reception with the mother of a five-year-old she very much agreed that the traditions should be upheld, but confessed that she did not allow her daughter to accompany her to funerals as the ritual was beyond her daughter's comprehension. She admitted that as a child *she* had been taken to funerals, and reflected that although she had not understood the meaning of them, she developed a recognition of the content and the process, the understanding came later. It was in that moment that she recognised she had not learned the rituals via teaching and explanations, but by experiencing them.

The second example happened during the interview with a 21-year-old who was surprisingly knowledgeable about death rituals. He attributed his knowledge to being involved in rituals such as nine-night, funerals and burials from an early age. He did not initially see how he could assist in educating others, but eventually identified that he was perfectly placed to share his knowledge with friends and associates, and not assign all the responsibility to the older generation. These examples are consistent with Durkheim's theory that the efficacy of rituals lie within their use, not solely in understanding them.

In a recent study of assimilation and heritage identity in the first-generation Coptic diaspora in the United States, Brinkerhoff (2015 p482) argued that 'assimilation does not have to yield a loss of heritage culture and their associated values and practices'. The research found that heritage identity remained almost intact as a result of robust religious structures, which is precisely the means by which it was achieved among first generation Jamaicans in the UK. The current issue in the UK is that the Jamaican diaspora is now in its fourth generation, and the religious structures which were central to maintaining death rituals are fragmenting, as one Pentecostal minister said of the third and fourth generations, 'they don't do church'. Other ways

must therefore be found to ensure the continuation of the practices, or at least to maintain the essence and meaning of the rituals. In the case of Jamaica, it is unlikely that there will be a reversion to the good-old-days of burial within three days and full community involvement for those who perceive the transformation of the rituals as a crisis, however nostalgically some may yearn for them. A nostalgia which Harrison notes is a necessary part of the process of adjustment to the experience of crisis and is therefore not surprising in this group. 'The nostalgic impulse is an important agency in adjustment to crisis' (Harrison, 2010 p17), and many of these groups have been exposed to multiple crises including the increased violence in Jamaica, the Windrush deportations, police violence which led to the Black Lives Matter movement and the ensuing challenges to the UK authorised heritage discourse.

The equal sixth most popular suggestion was to take children to Jamaica to learn the rituals and to use forums and workshops to teach the rituals.

7.3.6 Taking children to Jamaica, forums and workshops

Suggestions of maintaining ritual practice via workshops, forums, and taking children to Jamaica to observe the rituals came exclusively from UK interviewees.

Table 7.8 Taking children to Jamaica, forums and workshops to preserve heritage

What can be done to preserve the heritage?	UK	Jamaica	Total
Take children to Jamaica to observe the customs	4	-	4
Public forums and workshops	2	-	2

The four interviewees who suggested taking children to Jamaica had not taken into account the concurrent transformation of the rituals in Jamaica. This nostalgia, particularly of diasporic communities for a remembered homeland that no longer

exists is well represented in the literature (Lowenthal, 1989; Svetlana, 2001; Campbell, Smith and Wetherell, 2017; Stein, 2019). One example is the burial ritual which is substantially transformed in Jamaica. As outlined in Chapter 5, in the majority of cases the casket is either lowered into a vault or inserted into a sepulchre, whereas in the UK the coffin or casket is lowered directly into the ground and the family and friends fill in the grave as it used to be performed in Jamaica. In Jamaica sealing the sepulchre or vault is carried out by professional masons and not by the family and friends.

In the UK, carrying the coffin or casket and filling in the grave is viewed in some families as a rite of passage for males, and attempts to change this practice in Birmingham cemeteries is being strongly resisted. Some Jamaican men consider it an honour to be asked to assist. A few young men I spoke to for whom it had been their first experience of actively participating in the funeral and burial reported feelings of euphoria, of being positively transformed psychologically. Given that this is a rapidly declining practice in Jamaica and more slowly in the UK with the creeping use of mechanical diggers to fill in the graves, it is appropriate to question the psychological ramifications for Jamaican males. Should Jamaicans be concerned that the changes to the rituals are leading to a diminution of the traditional male roles, and therefore marginalising males from the rituals? There have been concerns expressed about Caribbean male marginalisation by Miller (1986, 1994) and the negative personal and social effects of this. More recent research has shown that most of the violent crimes in Jamaica are committed by young males on the margins of education and employment (Harriot and Jones, 2016), While this study is not proposing a causal link between diminishing male roles in death rituals and violent crimes, anything that further marginalises males should be examined. Not all the

interviewees thought intervention to preserve the rituals was necessary or desirable, suggesting instead that they should be allowed to evolve.

7.3.7 Allow organic change

The final proposed solution to the transforming rituals was to allow organic change. This stance should be distinguished from those who thought nothing could be done. One interviewee said she was all for change and went on to explain that she believed an interventionalist approach was counterintuitive to the Jamaican spirit of developing new art forms and other cultural expression with a distinctive Jamaican identity. She questioned the justification for retaining either European Christian based or African based rituals if something more representative of Jamaican's lived experience could evolve from the changes.

> I believe in change, and I think that as long as the dead or those who remain are not being disrespected, then whatever comes should be part of it… whatever it's morphed into, as long as there is a respect for the bereaved and the deceased, then yeah (Female aged 64 UK).

She is affirming Patterson's (2019) observation of Jamaicans' ability to syncretise new rituals as discussed in Chapter 6, and the widely expressed concerns in the literature on ICH that recording heritage and attempting to 'conserve' it may artificially 'freeze' it at an arbitrary point in its development and thus make it irrelevant - a museum piece (Lowenthal, 1989; Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2010).

By far the most dramatic suggestion for organic change to the death rituals, particularly the escalating costs of funerals was that made by an 82-year-old interviewee in Jamaica, which proved to be alarmingly prophetic.

> I would say if there is a great disaster like the Black death and great numbers of people are dying like flies, or there's a war and great numbers of people die, then it will slow it down. It would. I think so. Because the economy would be so tight and people wouldn't be able to go criss-crossing the continents to do that [attend funerals] and it would impact heavily on that kind of thing… then we might go back to normal burying. Yes (Male aged 82 Jamaica).

The COVID-19 pandemic had, and continues to have a significant impact on Jamaican death rituals. Indeed, the pandemic affected the death rituals of nations globally in three important ways, the rapid increase in number of deaths, the various forms of restrictions such as curfews and lockdowns which prohibited many death rituals, and, where death rituals were permitted, the reduction in the number of individuals who were able to participate. Jamaicans' responses to these challenges are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. They included attending events knowing they could not enter the buildings where the rituals were being conducted and congregating outside churches and cemeteries so that the families would be aware of their support, and the increased use of technology to stream and record events. What the individual and collective responses demonstrate is not just Jamaicans' adaptability, they also highlight that the restrictions helped to pinpoint the most important value of the rituals, that of presence: Making oneself physically available to show the bereaved that their loved one mattered. The COVID-19 pandemic presented an additional dimension by accelerating some of the processes of the change, while at the same time enabling Jamaicans in both locations to assess the core meanings of the rituals.

7.4 Conclusion

The chapter presented the consequences of the changes to the ritual in terms of those rituals that have become extinct, rituals at risk of extinction, rituals that are still extant, and the new rituals that are being created. It concludes that it is the protective rituals that are becoming extinct, or at least there is an appearance of extinction. The actual extinction of the rituals could be better determined in a more extensive study which allowed research subject to anonymise their responses given a) the intimate nature of the rituals, and b) the stigma attached to practising some of these rituals. This is especially so for Christians whose religion discourages belief in the intervention of the ancestors in the daily lives of the bereaved, but also for those who do not wish to appear 'backward' and 'superstitious', qualities characterised in the Jamaica 2030 Development Plan as undesirable for transition to developed nation status.

Another reason for the demise of the protective rituals is the waning belief in obeah in the UK, particularly among the younger generations. Belief in the effectiveness of obeah remains prevalent in Jamaica, as was demonstrated by the response to the Government's proposal to repeal the Obeah Law 1898 as discussed in Chapter 3. This may account for the wider practise of the protective rituals there than in the UK.

The research established that the public rituals of nine-night, funerals, burials, and receptions/repasses remain robust, and despite concerns about the transformation of the nine-night it is still valued in both Jamaica and in the UK.

While some of the rituals are being transformed in both locations, often simultaneously, there are legal and other differences between the two countries that affect what can be practised. For example, local authority regulations and child

protection legislation prohibit the practice of grave-digging in public cemeteries and passing babies and young children over coffins. The introduction of new rituals demonstrates that death practices remain important to cultural identity, and represent heritage in the making, confirming that heritage is not static, and is always evolving (Hall, 1999; UNESCO, 2003; Smith, 2006).

The proposals for preserving the rituals reflect the interviewees' perspectives as activists, archivists, educationalists, pessimists or pragmatists and the degree to which they are affected by the changes. All these viewpoints need to be taken into account in addressing the transforming death rituals.

The final chapter evaluates the significance of the study and the extent to which the objective has been met and the questions answered. It considers the implications of the findings for the UK Jamaican and other diasporas.

CHAPTER 8

CRISIS? WHOSE CRISIS?

8.1 Introduction

The objective of the research was to investigate whether changes to Jamaican death rituals constitute a crisis in heritage and national identity in Jamaica and the Jamaican UK diaspora based on concerns being expressed in the media and anecdotally in both locations. It also aimed to determine the nature and extent of the changes and the causes and consequences of the transformations.

This led to a wider range of questions that needed to be resolved, including: what is heritage, and do Jamaicans perceive the rituals as heritage? Are some rituals more important than others? What is national identity and how is it affected by the changes in the rituals? Are Jamaicans in both locations affected equally by the changes? What constitutes a crisis and for whom?

The research concludes that the changes to the rituals are perceived as a crisis for specific groups of Jamaicans, a crisis relating to loss of heritage and national identity, but proposes that this perception of crisis is influenced by a wider set of crises that have left certain sectors of Jamaican society, such as the elderly and the lower socioeconomic groups, feeling out of control. These crises, described in section 8.2.1 are the result of being subjected to liminality for extended periods of time in both Jamaica as a diaspora of Africa and Jamaicans in the UK as a double diaspora. The ambivalence and complexity of Jamaican national identity observed by Nettleford (1998) is a characteristic response to liminality and crisis, and this ambivalence,

when applied to the rituals and other aspects of Jamaican culture is both the result of and a cause of the changes.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the study in relation to the specific research objectives and existing literature, and is presented under three themes, namely crisis, liminality and ambivalence.

The chapter is divided into six sections. Following this brief introduction section 8.2 presents a summary and discussion of the research findings. Section 8.3 presents the contribution the study makes to the literature in terms of theory, policy and practice. Section 8.4. presents the limitations of the study while 8.5 makes recommendations for further research, and section 8.6 is the study's general conclusion.

8.2 Summary and discussion of the research findings

The summary and discussion are presented in three sections under the headings of crisis of change, living in liminality (as opposed to passing through), and the creativity of ambivalence.

8.2.1 Crisis of change

As with all the concepts used in this study crisis has meanings both in the academy and in everyday use and as such requires definition of its employment here. Definitions fall broadly within two camps. Firstly, crisis is an event or an incident that is so catastrophic that it endangers life or livelihood.

> Crises involve events and processes that carry severe threat, uncertainty, an unknown outcome, and urgency. Crises scramble plans, interrupt continuities, and brutally paralyze normal operations and human lives (Farazmand, 2014 p3).

Natural disasters, terrorism, industrial accidents, and medical emergencies fall into this category. A characteristic of this definition is the immediacy of decisions and action. Secondly, crisis is not the event but rather the individual's *reaction* to the incident. The event is only a crisis if the individual is thrown off balance by disruption to, or disturbance of thoughts, feelings, behaviour or beliefs about themselves and the world. It is characterised by the individual not knowing how to respond. Carkhuff and Berenson (1977 p165) observe that 'Crisis is a crisis because the individual knows no response to deal with a situation'.

Chapter 5 presented the changes to the rituals. By using oral history as part of the semi-structured interviews and making ethnographic observations of the current ritual events it was possible to document the transformations that have taken place between the way the elders remembered the rituals being performed and the way they are performed now. The study shows that a number of the rituals, mainly those that provide protection from, and protection for the spirit of the deceased are no longer practised. This is a source of crisis for a sector of older Jamaicans who feel not just the loss of this aspect of heritage, but possibly the loss of the protection these rituals provide. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, as they are the rituals that are normally performed privately the study cannot be definitive in proclaiming them extinct. The literature has generally focused on the public rituals (Chevannes, 1994; Senior, 2003; Williams, 2015; Gordon, 2018; Gouldson, 2020; Richards, 2021), but further research that enables data to be collected anonymously from respondents on

the use of these private rituals might furnish a more accurate account to reach a definitive conclusion about their demise. Some of the protective rituals are, by the findings of this study, extinct. Studies such as Bigambo (2019) and Richards (2021) looked at the diminishing use of 'traditional' rituals and concluded, as this study does, that the African based rituals are being eroded by the advancement of modernity, and in Jamaica's case the desire for developed nation status. In *A bibliometric analysis of research on intangible cultural heritage using CiteSpace* Su, et al (2019 p14) note that 'studies on ICH have mainly focused on … heritage space, heritage protection, heritage management, and landscape heritage.' They also observe that while heritage related to colonialism has received attention, this relates to discreet practices such as Columbus Day, and the Queens's birthday, but little has been done on the integration of the colonial practices with practices as fundamental as death rituals. This study of Jamaican death rituals demonstrates how integration of and resistance to the practices results in crisis for some Jamaicans. However, the specific crisis relating to the transformation and demise of the death rituals must be set within the context of other crises being experienced by Jamaicans that have had a direct impact on how the crisis of changes to death rituals is experienced.

The first of these is the increase in violent crime leading to escalating murders and the crisis experienced not just by the death but by the violence of the death (Harriot and Jones, 2016). This is experienced on personal and societal levels in Jamaica due to the emergency policing measures implemented in certain areas to control the violence as discussed in Chapter 3.

A second crisis, and one that proved to be catastrophic for many Jamaicans and their families in the UK, was what has come to be known as the Windrush crisis (Gentleman, 2018, 2019; BBC, 2018b). As described in Chapter 3, it involved many

Jamaicans who migrated to the UK while Jamaica was still a British colony as British citizens, being deported illegally to Jamaica for lack of the documentation required for Jamaicans who arrived post-independence. This presented not just a crisis of national identity in terms of legal status, but in psychological affiliation as some still identified as British. These older Jamaicans, who came to be known as the Windrush Generation, experienced, and continue to experience crisis of national identity as well as the cultural crisis of being forcibly placed in the evolved culture of Jamaica where they had not been part of the evolution. For some this felt alien. Many suffered huge financial losses for which they are still awaiting compensation – some died before they could be compensated and the financial and psychological crises continue for their families. These insecurities generated in Jamaicans in the UK saw an increase in applications from members of the Jamaican diaspora for Jamaican citizenship and passports (The Gleaner, 2022). This crisis has received much media attention and medical, legal, social and psychological comment. The study does not aim to replicate these, but rather to note that it affected mainly older Jamaicans.

The third crisis during the time of this research which has undoubtedly influenced many Jamaicans was The Black Lives Matter movement which began in the United States in 2013 (#BlackLivesMatter, 2013) and was embraced in the UK, and to a much lesser extent in Jamaica, the latter not having the imperatives of the racial killings and structural discrimination experienced in the often-hostile US or UK host nations. Questions of heritage were raised and AHD contested with the toppling of statues and other monuments relating to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, with high levels of emotional involvement in what soon became a hotly contested and politicised debate (BBC, 2020; Amnesty, UK 2021; Francis, 2021).

It was within this environment that four months into the field study the COVID-19 crisis emerged, a pandemic that resulted in thousands, and in countries such as the US, hundreds of thousands of excess deaths. Such was the nature of transmission of the virus that restrictions were enforced by many governments, including Jamaica and the UK. These included no contact with corpses that died from the virus, and reduced numbers of individuals who were able to attend the public rituals. This, as discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, had a profound effect on the rituals and cultural practices of Jamaican death rituals and on death rituals globally as expressed by Ali, (2021) in '*From normal to viral body: death rituals during ordinary and extraordinary Covidian times in Pakistan.* It is within the context of these national and international crises that the Jamaican crises of heritage and national identity are discussed and needs to be recognised.

The findings propose that the crisis that is being experienced by certain sectors of Jamaicans is symptomatic of wider crises but it is those who fulfil the latter definition of crisis, i.e. not knowing how to respond, who are experiencing the changes as crisis. It is worth noting that the interviewees did not use the word crisis to describe their responses to the changes, but their reported responses (or lack of responses) are consistent with definitions of crisis.

Of the changes observed most are with the ritual of nine-night whose meaning is no longer clear. A full discussion of the different interpretations of the meanings is given in Chapter 7. Despite fears for its demise, the study concludes that it is still valued as a death ritual for its social and psychological functions, but less so for its spiritual function. It is the most controversial and widely discussed ritual (Williams, 2015; Gordon, 2018; Richards, 2021) because it, of all the public rituals, is not reflected in the wider UK society, and has no counterpart in Western death rituals. The fate of

this ritual will be defined by the willingness of Jamaicans to embrace the African sentiments of nine-night.

While there are changes to funerals and burials their meanings are still understood and accepted in both locations as they are reflected in the wider Western cultures. These three public rituals, nine-night, funerals and burials and that of the reception/repass are still the corner stones of Jamaican death rituals and look set to remain so for some time despite the ongoing transformations.

8.2.2. Living in liminality

In discussing the findings, I revisit van Gennep's (1960) and Turner's (1967) *Betwixt and between* concept of liminality described in Chapter 2 and utilise it as an analytical concept outside the narrow confines of rituals. The concept was first applied in this way by Eisenstadt (1985) and has become increasingly popular as

> A prism through which to understand transformation in the contemporary world… a powerful tool of analysis that can be used to explore different problems at the intersection of anthropology and political studies (Horvath, Thomassen & Wyara, 2015 p1).

According to van Gennep liminality is the space between the start of the ritual and its conclusion in rites of passage, between separation and integration. It is a space of inherent danger and of disruption to family and society, before the participants in the rituals are returned to the community. In using the concept to analyse contemporary world transformation, Ryzova (2022 p 1-2) suggests that

> The key idea here is to approach periods of transition/crisis as liminal passages, the periods when existing structures are shattered, when taken-for-granted order of the world crumbles, when established ways of doing things no longer makes sense. Established norms and hierarchies are turned upside down, and 'all that is solid melts into air.

This definition of liminality can be applied not just to the changes to the rituals themselves where the taken-for-granted order of the nine-night, funerals and burials may not yet have crumbled, but certainly are crumbling, and some of the private rituals according to this study have already crumbled.

The study concludes that the Jamaican government's attempts to unite the nation has resulted in greater ambivalence and complexity. Using van Gennep's (1960) concept of liminality it can be seen that the publication of the national development plan with a clear intention to transform Jamaica from an *ethnie* nation to a civic one, had the effect of creating a liminal space with all its characteristic dangers and uncertainties. However, while liminality within rituals is often scripted and the outcomes are known, that is, following a liminal period of mourning the body is buried or cremated and the bereaved return to their regular lives, there may be hoped for, or even planned for outcomes for the nation, but there is no certainty.

The research finds that this liminal space is a contributor to the crisis being experienced by some Jamaicans. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 6 older people are wary of being considered backward in the new forward-thinking nation and refrain for passing on the rituals to the younger people in whom the future of the nation has been entrusted. Also discussed in Chapter 6 is the lack of focus on the value of community in the plan which is being interpreted as individualism, where less well-off families are not helped as they were formerly with ritual costs. This is not to suggest that the changes began with the publication of the plan, rather that it is accelerating a process that was already in train. Thomassen (2014 p85) reiterates that 'liminality has to do with transition… and the ways in which transitions shape both persons and communities.' He goes on to add that as a result of this,

> Whether in case of rituals or crises, the aim is to return to conditions of stability and normality. This happens by forging a new identity in the individual case, reflecting a shift of one's position within the social order; while in the case of society new common bonds are formed through the cathartic experience of communitas (Turner 1969). Both processes involve the social and the asocial, and re-draw the boundaries between them (Thomassen, 2014 p92).

While this may be the desire for both individual and government, Szakolczai (2000 p220) asserts that the speed and complexity of global change is resulting in 'permanent liminality' which is experienced when any part of the sequence of separation, liminality and re-integration becomes frozen. What may be a more useful approach is to work with the opportunities that crises present. Farazmand (2014 p5) suggests that while crises are often destructive 'they may also develop opportunities for a new order, changes that may produce positive results'.

8.2.3 The creativity of ambivalence

That Jamaican cultural heritage, including the death rituals, is a synthesis of a number of influences, predominantly African and European, but also to a lesser extent Indian, Chinese and Syrian is widely acknowledged (Chevannes, 1994; Nettleford, 1998; Beckford, 2000; Senior, 2003; Devonish, 2010), and is embedded in Jamaica's national motto 'Out of Many One People'. That the Jamaican nation is approximately 90% Black African descendants was confirmed in the 2011 census and is also evident when visiting Jamaica or at meetings with the Jamaican UK diaspora. Yet there is ambivalence about the national identity of Jamaica for many Jamaicans, the result of what Nettleford (1998) notes as the complexity of the nation's origins.

As discussed in Chapter 2 nations are created via two routes, the *ethnie* route which reflects the majority ethnic makeup of the nation and the civic route where there is no clear majority and the nation is united around civic institutions (Smith, 1991). Jamaica is obviously an *ethnie* nation with its large proportion of Black Africans. The research agrees with Nettleford's (1998) observation that the ambivalence and complexity of Jamaica's national identity is the result of the nature of its creation, but disputes that the ambivalence is wholly detrimental to Jamaica's culture and national identity as Nettleford suggests. It proposes instead that this ambivalence also serves as a dynamic source of creativity, using Giesen's (2015) conceptualisation of ambivalence. In *Inbetweenness and Ambivalence* he uses the concept of liminality to deal with what he calls the extraordinary space between the opposites, where instead of looking back to the past or forward to the future, the focus is on the space in between. This is where culture is constructed. Indeed, he asserts that it is *essential* for the construction of culture (Giesen, 2015 p61).

> The sociology of ambivalence claims that ambivalences, disturbances, paradoxes, misunderstandings, and exceptions are not critical risks to social order but rather indispensable elements of this order (Giesen, 2015 p62).

It is the phenomenon of ambivalence that drives the process of social communication.

The study concludes that it is this ambivalence that is the dynamic force behind Jamaica's creativity. It forces continued discussions and communications about cultural and national identity of which this study is a part. Jamaica is perhaps the most researched nation in the Caribbean culturally (Murrell, Spencer and McFarlane, 1998; Thompson, 2009; Beckford, 2014; Johnson, 2019; Patterson, 2019). The study proposes that without the surprises and disturbances that are characteristics of

ambivalence the nation's creativity would be curtailed. As noted in Chapter 3 Jamaica's prominence on the global stage far exceeds it physical and demographic size. Giesen (2015 p62) notes that within the liminal ambivalent space 'what was treated as a crisis of social order before, and what actors mostly now see as a crisis, emerges as the indispensable key to the communicative reproduction of cultural order'. This reproduction of cultural order is seen in the creation of new rituals such as those described in Chapter 5, to meet the current needs of the nation, and may in time become the 'traditional' death rituals of the past to which future generations hanker.

The following section looks at the contributions the study makes to the literature.

8.3 Contribution the study makes to the literature in terms of theory, policy and practice.

The exploratory nature of the research necessitated the use of a broad spectrum of social and political theories, to which the study has contributed to a greater or lesser extent. These include theories of crisis and ritual, including the extended conceptualisation of liminality beyond the confines of ritual process to analysis of local and global crisis. It has also contributed to theories of heritage, national identity and diaspora including the use of relational dialectic theory to demonstrate that the fluidity of borders and the advances in communication technology enable diasporas to be classified as one nation with the homeland.

Although the contributions will be addressed within each theoretical framework, what the study demonstrates is that an enquiry of this nature can yield broader and deeper seams of data than a single approach. One result of this broad approach is, however,

that it raised a number of questions that could not be answered by this study. They form part of the recommendations for further research addressed in section 8.5. For example, while being able to identify the sectors of Jamaicans that were experiencing the changing rituals as crises of heritage and national identity, and the specific aspects of the changes leading to the crises, the study was not able to account for the differences in the individual responses. There is scope for further research into coping mechanisms among Jamaicans, or indeed other groups, to crises, particularly as there is evidence that there are sectors such as musicians, artists and athletes that seem to thrive within the circumstances. Furthermore, even within the sectors that have been identified in this study as being in crisis, there are others who thrive.

Contribution to national identity. As discussed in section 1.1, strong national identity is an important requirement for trust among citizens, strong governance, and safety and security. This study, in viewing national identity through the lens of heritage confirms the connection between a lack of knowledge of heritage and concerns about national identity (Fukuyama 2018). However, it is not the only issue in Jamaica's national identity and the reluctance of some Jamaicans to engage with the official identity. For example, groups such as Rastafari are very knowledgeable about Jamaica's heritage, but consistently contest the version that the government projects as the official AHD. This study outlines the processes by which Rastafari and other pro-African Jamaicans are influencing changes to the AHD via the death rituals. This is the first in depth study of these processes, thus extending Chevannes' (1998) previous commentary on Rastafari death rituals, or rather the lack of them.

Contribution to religion. For scholars of religious studies this study makes a valuable contribution to the field of death and bereavement studies, particularly in the areas of the relationship between religion, belief in the afterlife, and death attitudes as

investigated by Falkenhain and Handal (2003). It also contributes to the study of religious syncretism. For those interested in the health perspectives of bereavement, this study makes a contribution that supports Flannely et al (2012) research that belief in the afterlife and the link to psychological and psychiatric symptoms are worthy of investigation, and indeed one of the recommendations from this study is further investigation into the psychological impact ofchanges of the rituals, particularly in males. The study finds changing religious beliefs to be a contributor to the changing death rituals, and that some of the Christian ministers interviewed were at a loss to grasp the underlying issues around the changes. This study makes a valuable contribution to ministerial training in death and bereavement. Students of pastoral care will also benefit from the findings within this study, particularly as it relates to supporting the bereaved in these changing times.

Contribution to heritage and identity. Most studies addressing Black post-colonial heritage have studied African nations (Tunbridge and Ashworth ,1996; Marschall, 2008; Bonsu and Belk, 2015, Bigambo, 2019). While much can be extrapolated from these studies to the Jamaican experience they do not adequately address the post-colonial heritage of a nation that has also experienced slavery and the associated diaspora existence. For example, Marschall discusses the return to the culture that the colonisers suppressed, including re-establishing place names and reclaiming culturally significant spaces. In ex-slave societies such as Jamaica there was no original culture to reclaim given that slave societies were not homogenous groups from Africa as discussed in Chapter 3, and the original inhabitants of Jamaica were exterminated by the colonisers. Ex-slave societies' heritage is always a syncretism of the masters and the slaves which presents challenges on what to transmit to future generations once independence is achieved. This study contributes to understanding

the intergenerational transmission of heritage in this context by focusing on one area of heritage. The findings from this study will inform other post-slavery, post-colonial Black nations research with a focus on intergenerational transmission of heritage, and, with the development of new rituals described in Chapter 5, the responses to changing social conditions and global influences.

While this study predominantly addressed the effects of the changing rituals on national identity in response to the concerns being expressed in the community, it was not possible to do so without addressing heritage as a cultural process and the extent to which Jamaicans perceptions of their cultural identity is reflected in their responses. This is interwoven throughout the discussions in Chapters 5 to 8. As such the study contributes to cultural identity in transition and supports the work of Hall (1990), Hall and du Gay (1996), Graham and Howard (2008) and Smith (2006) in their assertion of the evolution of culture (Hall, 1090) identity (Hall and du Gay, (1996) and heritage (Graham and Howard, 2008; Smith, 2006). The introduction of new rituals demonstrates that death practices remain important to cultural identity, and represent heritage in the making. The study confirms that Jamaican death rituals as heritage is not static, and is constantly evolving.

Contributions to Diaspora. The study investigates the same issue simultaneously in a diaspora and homeland. Where studies such as Vassel (2002) and Horst (2004) looked at the diaspora as a separate entity to the homeland to identify differences between the two locations, this study applied relational dialectic theory (RDT) to address the meaning making process of the changes to the rituals in both locations. As discussed in Chapter 4 RDT was applied to the analyses of the semi-structured interviews and interpretation of the discourse from both locations as different members of the same family. It also provided an understanding of the processes

used by marginalised heritage discourses to resist the dominant discourses. Using RDT in this context is a response to Baxter et al's (2021 p12) call for the theory to be applied in fields outside the arena of family therapy.

Contributions to rituals. The research was timely in being able to address the experiences of changes to a specific nation's death rituals at a time when death rituals globally were being forcibly transformed. It was therefore able to identify the core essentials of the rituals, a question that has not previously been explored theoretically. This distillation of the rituals to their most important components and the psychological effects of this on individuals is an area that is in need of further development.

In 2018 Strathen and Stewart devoted a special paper in the *Journal of Ritual Studies* to 'trends in the analysis of ritual processes' and noted that one of the major trends was 'ritual at risk'. This study contributes to that discourse of rituals at risk, particularly in relation to rituals not taught to younger people (Bigambo, 2019; Saeji, 2019; Onipede and Philips, 2021). They also identified a trend in ritual and innovation, where innovation is 'a response to failure' (Strathen and Stewart, 2018 p56). For students of ritual interested in the process of innovation, this study has something to offer.

The study also contributes to transition theories, not just on ritual transition but also to diaspora transition, and how that movement is no longer a one-way process from the homeland to the host nation, but highlights the effects on both the homeland and the host nation when members of the diaspora transition between both locations and effectively lives in both.

The study establishes that Jamaican death rituals are definable as intangible cultural heritage and that they are considered important to national identity by many Jamaicans. By categorising the rituals into their origins and symbolic uses the study identified the categories of rituals that are least practised, and possibly extinct, as those that are protective in nature, either protecting the bereaved from the spirit of the deceased or the spirit of the deceased from obeah practitioners who would wish to use it for nefarious means. Students of rituals whose interest is in meaning-making and the creation of new rituals in responses to changing belief and values will find the study useful. Berinato (2020), carried out research into the rituals created during the COVID-19 pandemic to cope with the crisis. Comparisons could usefully be made with the types of rituals created over a longer period of time and those created in response to short term crisis and the sustainability of practice of both.

Heritage policy makers such as Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) will find the study useful in terms of its identification of the importance of the death rituals as heritage, government development departments could utilise these findings to place more emphasis on community and culture. It raises questions about formal recognition of the rituals as ICH and the role of policy makers in safeguarding them. There were interviewees who considered this the role of the JNHT. While the study will also be of interest to members of the Jamaican general public and those who contributed to the study in some way, it will also be of interest to stakeholders in crisis management and crisis counselling.

8.4 Limitations of the study

The study focused exclusively on the rituals of death in van Gennep's crucial category of *Rites of Passage,* primarily because they are the ones about which

concerns were being expressed. There are changes to other rituals such as those of birth and marriage, the extent of which has not been investigated. Farazmand (2014) suggests that being able to anticipate a crisis is the basis of good crisis management, and while there does not appear to be an impending crisis in birth and marriage rituals, research into the process of their transformation would be a barometer to the state of their transition, which might reveal more facets of Jamaican culture and identity.

It would have been useful to explore further the psychological effects of prolonged liminality, particularly as this was enforced on many families by the COVID-19 restrictions. I was made aware anecdotally that many Jamaicans found this distressing. Research into the effects of COVID-19 restrictions of death rituals is emerging elsewhere.

For instance, Ali (2021) compared pre-COVID-19 rituals with those permitted during the restrictions using autoethnography. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend any events in person during the restrictions, but this research provides a good baseline from which comparisons can be made, collecting as it did extensive data on Jamaican death rituals prior to the COVID-19 restrictions. Research to assess the effects of the pandemic on Jamaican death rituals would be a natural sequel.

The study does not address the issue of crisis management in response to the pandemic. Research into the effectiveness or otherwise of governmental responses are already emerging (Duffy, 2020; Martinez-Cordoba et al, 2021; Siew et al, 2022) and no doubt will continue to be of interest when the emergency measures are lifted.

As discussed in Chapter 4, there were limitations on the numbers of ritual events that I was able to observe in Jamaica due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19

pandemic. While I was able to observe some events online, either recorded or steamed live on various platforms, I was only able to observe what the camera chose to show which was mainly the arrival of the casket, the minister performing the ritual and the various tributes. As a result, much of the activity that did not take centre stage, but may have been no less socially and culturally important, was unavailable to me. Due to these limitations the data on nine-night in Jamaica was sourced exclusively from interviews, documentation and from vicarious observations on the internet.

Two of the significant changes described in Chapter 5, namely wheeling the coffin or casket into the church or crematorium on a trolley, and using a digger to fill in the grave are duties usually carried out by male family and friends. It would have been interesting to delve deeper into the effect of this erosion of gender specific role on male identity in the death ritual, given the positive reports of the young men who had taken part in these for the first time, and the adverse effects of marginalisation of Caribbean males identified by Miller (1986; 1994).

8.5 Recommendation for further studies

Young males who had played an active part in the death rituals for the first time reported an enhanced psychological well-being and connectedness with their Jamaican heritage and identity. Research should be carried out to determine whether this can be used to enhance self-esteem and foster a sense of community and social coherence. Given the marginalising effect of the current transformations on males, a positive role in rituals could potentially counteract the negative impacts of other social issues.

The psychological effects of increased liminality is an area of research with global implications as individuals in most countries were subjected to enforced liminality during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Students of ritual and psychology may find this a worthwhile area of study to identify the extent of the problem and to instigate remedial strategies.

Turner (1967) considers the symbols within rituals vital to understanding their meanings. While this study was able to identity the symbolic meaning of the performed rituals it was not possible to identify the meaning of all the artefacts used in the rituals. Research into this aspect of the rituals will complement this study in providing a more complete analysis of the death rituals. For instance, the symbolic meaning of the ankh, incense, drums and so on will provide a more rounded understanding of the meanings within the rituals.

Rastafari and other Pan Africanists such as Nettleford (1994) Devonish (2012; 2020) and the linguist and performer Louise Bennett have been very vocal in their messages of Black nations reidentifying with Africa. They are a product of Jamaica and have had a significant effect not just on the death rituals but on other areas of Jamaican life such as music, language and the arts. Research into the death rituals of other Caribbean nations to determine the extent of transformations that have resulted from incorporating African practices and symbols would provide a useful comparison of regional changes.

Given the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic it is possible that more rituals are being created in both Jamaica and in the UK. Further studies should be conducted to evaluate the effect of the pandemic on Jamaican death rituals as they were severely impacted by the restrictions. The effects of these restrictions, and the responses of

the Jamaican communities in both Jamaica and in the UK are discussed in Chapter 7 and indicate that during the restrictions when only 20-50 people were permitted to attend funerals and burials, many, sometimes hundreds of Jamaicans congregated outside the church or cemetery to show support to the bereaved. When asked why he did not just watch the funeral on livestream one attendee replied that it was important for the family to see that he came out to support them, that their deceased was significant to more than just the family, and he believed it was the same for all the others gathered there. It underlined that presence is at the heart of Jamaican death rituals, when all else is stripped away.

8.6 Conclusion

The study makes a significant contribution to understanding the experience of crisis in response to loss of heritage and national identity. It also provides considerable insight into the crises that result from prolonged experience of liminality, both within the rituals, such as the delay in disposal of the body, and within the wider society as a result of extended social transition. It argues that the 'ambivalence and complexity' (Netleford, 1998 pxi) surrounding Jamaica's national identity need not be experienced as a negative phenomenon. Instead, it concludes that ambivalence acts as a dynamic force for Jamaica's creativity which is evidenced by a global presence exceeding its physical and demographic size. Ambivalence creates the dialectic tension observed by Johnson (2019) that allows this to occur.

Of course, the liminal space represent danger as well as opportunity, and that danger is reflected in the 'mayhem and violence' (Gouldson 2020 n/p) in some Jamaican communities and in the Jamaican UK diaspora, as Jamaicans negotiate and re-

negotiate their national identity. The death rituals, as an important element of Jamaica's cultural heritage, form part of that re-negotiation of identity with the resultant experience of crisis for some sectors of the society, mainly the elderly and members of the lower socioeconomic groups.

The study details the main causes of the changes to the death rituals as acculturation, increased affluence, the role played by funeral directors, technology, changing religious beliefs, the influence of Rastafari and changing values of Jamaicans, factors which, other than the influence of Rastafari are not exclusive to Jamaican death rituals changes. What it does provide which is specific to Jamaica, but can be utilised as a model for other studies, is an analysis of the processes by which the rituals are being transformed and the intergenerational consequences for transmitting heritage.

The study identifies the forms of resistance to authorised heritage discourse (AHD), and authorised national identity that have challenged successive Jamaican governments' reluctance to acknowledge Jamaica as first and foremost a Black nation. This is despite the evidence that Jamaica's significant international profile is the result of the activities of its Black nationals in music, sport, food, literature, dance, language and religion from a positive aspect and the poverty and violent crime on the negative side. Such intransigence by the government has resulted in extremely successful subaltern subversions of the authorised heritage and national identity discourses, which have been achieved while acknowledging the contributions made by Jamaica's minority groups.

This study has been about transition and the responses to the transitioning death rituals among Jamaicans. It argues the importance of liminality in transition as does

Thomassen (2014 p4**)** ‘Liminality is a universal concept: cultures and human lives cannot exist without moments of transition, and those brief important spaces where we live through the in-between.’ However, when liminality is extended and become what Szakolczai calls ‘permanent liminality’ that is, ‘Liminality becomes a permanent condition when any of the phases in this sequence [of separation, liminality and re-aggregation] become frozen, as if a film stopped at a particular frame’ (Szakolczai 2000 p220), then the experience often results in crisis.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWEES WHO WISHED TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED

Jamaica interviewees

Bivian Brown

Chiney

Everitt Heaven

Hope Heaven

Andrew Hyde

Dwight Hyde

Karen Hyde

Winsome Hyde

Mr. Murray

Revered O Murray

Myrna

Philomena

Philomena's daughter

Reverend Roger

Sylvia

Dorrette Spence

Dee Williamson

Nick Williamson

UK interviewees

Sue Brown

F. Brown

Vanley Burke

Elaine Carter

C. Craig

Charmayne

R. Delaney

Elisha Francis

Jenai Francis

Tony Kelly

K. Lawrence

N. B. Lewin

Julian Lewin

I Lewin

M. Roper

W. Roper

Rev. Lewis

Rev. Lloyd

Rev. R. Tread

M. Stickler

G. Ward

L. Ward

APPENDIX 2

RESEARCH RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear

Re: Jamaican death practices as intangible cultural heritage study

I am a PhD student at the University of Birmingham carrying out research into the different customs and practices that Jamaicans engage in when a person dies.

I have read in the media, and have also spoken to a number of people who believe that these practices are changing. I am conducting research to see to what the consequences of these changes are for the Jamaican diaspora in the UK, and for Jamaicans in Jamaica.

The research aims to identify the range of practices, how they are carried out and what understanding Jamaicans have of the practices. The research also aims to assess what effects changes to death practices, such as nine night and funerals are having on the essence of these practices.

I will carry out the study in the UK and in Jamaica using mainly interviews, but I will also be observing how nine nights, funerals and memorial services are conducted.

The interviews will be approximately 45 minutes to an hour and will be recorded so we can get the most from the time.

If you are interested in taking part in this research, or you would like more information before deciding please contact me:

Predencia Dixon, or on

I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest wishes

Predencia Dixon

APPENDIX 3

RESEARCH INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Jamaican death practices as intangible cultural heritage study

Predencia Dixon:
Heritage Department University of Birmingham UK

Information for participants

Thank you for considering participating in this study which will take place from January 2019 to January 2020.
This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant, if you agree to take part.

1. What is the research about?
The research aims to identify the range of practices Jamaicans engage in following the death of a person and the extent to which Jamaicans see them as part of their identity and heritage.
It will also try to ascertain whether changes to these practices compromises our intangible cultural heritage, and what, if anything can be / should be done to preserve them for future generations.
The study will use interviews as a way of getting people's personal views, and observations to see what is actually being done.

2. Do I have to take part?
If you do decide to take part in the interviews I will ask you to sign a consent form which you can sign and return in advance of the interview or sign at the meeting.

3. What will my involvement be?
I will ask you a number of questions about your knowledge of Jamaican customs and practices around death, and what, if anything, you have personally been involved in. The interview will be recorded so that we can keep the time to about 45 minutes to an hour.

4. How do I withdraw from the study?
You can withdraw from the study within 28 days, without having to give a reason. If any of the questions during the interview makes you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them and you can withdraw from the interview at any time. If you withdraw from the study within 56 days after the interview I will not retain the information you have given.

5. What will my information be used for?
I will use the collected information for a research project which will form part of my thesis for a PhD. The data may also be used in other academic publications, conference presentations, journal articles, and articles for blogs on the website etc. which are related to this topic.

6. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised?
The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only I will have access to the files and any audio recordings. Your data will be anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports

or publications resulting from the study unless you agree for that to happen.[1] However, it may be possible to identify some people because of their position within an organisation, or because of something they may have said. If this is likely to be the case I will discuss this with you before using your information. All digital files, transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Any hard copies of research information will be kept in locked files at all times.

7. What if I have a question or complaint?

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact me on

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact Dr John Carman, Senior Lecturer, University of Birmingham, on 0121 414 7493 or

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached.

APPENDIX 4

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Jamaican death practices as intangible cultural heritage study

Predencia Dixon:

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY.

I agree to taking part in the study	YES / NO
I understand that I am free to decline to participate in this research study, or I may withdraw my participation at any point without penalty. My decision whether or not to participate in this research study will have no negative impacts on me either personally or professionally.	YES / NO
I confirm that I have read/or have had read to me, and understood the information sheet provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask any questions I have.	YES / NO
I understand that my data will be kept for up to ten years and then destroyed	YES / NO
I agree to the interview/focus group being audio recorded	YES / NO
I agree for photographs and video recordings to be used if I am able to see them prior to their use.	YES / NO

Please retain a copy of this consent form.

Participant name:

Signature: ___________________________________ Date _________________

Interviewer name:

Signature:___________________________________ Date _________________

For information please contact: Predencia Dixon, [redacted] or
Dr John Carman [redacted]

APPENDIX 5

COMMON DEATH PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Which of the following practices are you aware of or have used. Which do you understand the meaning of, whether you have used them or not. Please tick or circle where appropriate.

1.	Taking the body out feet first out of a house	aware of	used	understand
2.	Spinning the coffin around on the way to the funeral	aware of	used	understand
3.	Walking backwards from the funeral	aware of	used	understand
4.	Rearranging the furniture in the house	aware of	used	understand
5.	Covering the mirrors in the house	aware of	used	understand
6.	Women wearing red panties after partner’s death	aware of	used	understand
7.	Tying red ribbon on children	aware of	used	understand
8.	Wearing black at a funeral	aware of	used	understand
9.	Wearing purple at a funeral	aware of	used	understand
10.	Passing children over a coffin	aware of	used	understand
11.	Placing beans in the pockets of the deceased before burial	aware of	used	understand
12.	Placing items in the coffin of the deceased	aware of	used	understand
13.	Nine-night	aware of	used	understand
14.	Cremation	aware of	used	understand
15.	Scattering of ashes	aware of	used	understand
16.	Burials	aware of	used	understand
17.	What other practices are you aware of or have used			

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS UK

1. What is your age 18-30 31-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80-89 90 and over?
2. Are you male or female?
3. What is or was your occupation?
4. What is your religion?
5. When did you come to the UK?
6. What do you believe are the important customs and practices to be observed when someone dies?
7. Do you believe that these customs and practices form part of your Jamaican identity?
8. What, if any, changes have you notices with Jamaican death customs and practices in the UK?
9. What, if any, changes have you noticed with Jamaican death customs and practices in Jamaica?
10. What do you believe is causing these changes (a) in the UK and (b) in Jamaica?
11. What effects do you think these changes have on what is handed down to the coming generations as Jamaican heritage?
12. What, if anything, can be done to preserve this heritage

APPENDIX 7

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS JAMAICA

1. What is your age 18-30 31-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80-89 90 and over?
2. Are you male or female?
3. What is or was your occupation?
4. what is your religion?
5. Have you always lived in Jamaica? If not, where else have you lived and when did you return to Jamaica?
6. What do you believe are the important customs and practices to be observed when someone dies?
7. Do you believe that these customs and practices form part of your Jamaican identity?
8. What, if any, changes have you noticed with Jamaican death customs and practices?
9. What do you believe is causing these changes?
10. What effects do you think these changes have on what is handed down to the coming generations as Jamaican heritage?
11. What, if anything, can be done to preserve this heritage?

APPENDIX 8

BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICES UK

Bereavement counselling and support organisations UK

Cruse Bereavement Care - National charity that provides bereavement support, grief counselling and other help and resources for anyone in the UK who has lost a loved one. It also provides specialist support for young people after a loved one has died, and families and friends bereaved by suicide or alcohol and drug-related deaths.

Website: www.cruse.org.uk Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Child Bereavement UK - Child Bereavement UK provides support and advocacy for children after a loved one dies and for families who have lost a child.

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org Helpline: 0800 0288840

Winston's Wish - helps children and families after the death of a parent, sibling or carer, including advice on how to talk to a child about death, funerals, and grief. It provides specific support for families who have lost someone because of serious illness, suicide or on military service.

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk Helpline: 08088 020 021

Scotty's Little Soldiers helps children and families after the death of a parent who was a member of the regular and reserve British armed forces at the time of their death, or who died because of a condition from which they had to be medically discharged from the forces. Support includes holidays, activities and grief counselling in association with Winston's Wish.

Website: www.scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk Tel: 0800 092 8571

Suicide -Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS) Helpline, support groups and retreats for people over 18 years of age who have been bereaved by suicide, including specific help for LGBT+ people.

Website: www.uksobs.org Helpline: 0300 111 5065

Death by alcohol or drugs BEAD - Support and grief counselling for people after the death of a loved one from alcohol and drug use provided by Cruse Bereavement Care, including specific advice on working with the police and dealing with social stigma.

Website: www.beadproject.org.uk Helpline (Cruse Bereavement Care): 0808 808 1677

Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM) Support and counselling for families who have lost a loved one because of murder or manslaughter. Resources include a helpline, bereavement retreats and seminars.

Website: www.samm.org.uk Helpline: 0845 872 3440

APPENDIX 9

BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES JAMAICA

Bereavement counselling and support organisations Jamaica

Delaphena's Grief and Healing – General bereavement counselling.

Website http://www.delapenhasfuneralservices.com/grief-healing/

Email

Counselling and Therapy Centre - Therapy sessions for adolescents and adults related to range of issues including grief and loss.

Website https://kingstontherapist.business.site/

Email

Institute for Caribbean Children and Families - Individual counselling is provided for children outside of the scope of normal school setting in grief, bereavement and loss.

Website https://www.drccrawfordbrown.com/iccf/

email:

Brown's Funeral Home Ltd - General grief and bereavement counselling Website https://jamaicafuneral.wixsite.com/brownsfuneralhomeltd/contact

Email

Local pastoral care – Your local minister that offers bereavement counselling is: (insert local contact details)

………
………
………

APPENDIX 10

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE/CHECKLIST FOR NINE NIGHTS

When does the main nine-night celebrations take place?
a) 9 nights after the death b) the night before the funeral c) other
Is the is the nine-night held:
a) At the dead person's home b) at another relative's home c) at another venue – please specify
What activities are there at the nine-night?
a) Prayers; b) hymns; c) music; d) dominoes; e) card games; f) rum drinking; g) other kinds of alcohol drinking;
What foods are served?
a) Soup; b) chicken; c) curry goat/mutton; d) pork; e) rice and peas; f) plain rice; g) other
Is there food on sale?
a) Yes; b) no.
Is there a spirit/duppy table?
a) Yes; b) no
If yes what is on it?
a) White bread; b) bammy; c) fish; d) rum; e) other alcohol; f) other.
How long is the nine-night scheduled for?
a) 1-2 hours; b) 3-4 hours; c) 5-6 hours; d) all night; e) other.

Observation checklist for funerals

1. How is the coffin transported? Hearse Car Horse & carriage
2. Type of coffin standard custom designed
3. Floral tributes standard custom designed
4. How is the coffin carried into the church/crematorium? Professional pallbearers; family pallbearers; on a trolley with family walking behind
5. Length of service 30 mins or less; 30-60 mins; 1-2 hours; more than 2 hours
6. Service includes; tributes; eulogy; sermon; open coffin; other
7. Dress colours; black; purple; white; bright colours
8. Use of choir; yes; no
9. Use of African drums; use of other instruments
10. Use of a band
11. Other

Burial

1. How is the coffin transported to the cemetery?
2. How is the coffin transferred from vehicle to the grave?
3. How long is the graveside service? 30 minutes or less; 30-60 mins; 1-2 hours; more than 2 hours.
4. Are graveside hymns sung?
5. Use of choir; use of drums; use of other instruments; recorded music played.
6. Who fills in the grave? Family/friends; males/females; official workers.
7. Is entombment carried out? Yes; no.
8. If yes, by whom?

The reception

1. Is the reception open to all who attended the funeral? Yes; no.
2. Where is the reception held? In a church hall; at the deceased home; at another relative's home; at a hired venue; other?
3. Are there tributes/speeches? Yes; no.
4. What food is served? Soup; fish; chicken; curry goat/mutton; rice; salads.
5. What, if any, music is played? Is the reception a party/dance?
6. How long is it scheduled for? 30 minutes or less; 30-60 minutes; 1-2 hours; more than 3-4 hours; more than 4 hours.

APPENDIX 11

SAMPLING UK AND JAMAICA

Interviews

Those involved professionally	Number	Location
Religious ministers	10	UK/Jamaica
Undertakers	10	UK/Jamaica
Caterers	10	UK/Jamaica
Florists	10	UK/Jamaica
Care home staff	10	UK/Jamaica
Venues	10	UK/Jamaica
Church members across all age groups	20	UK/Jamaica
Social club members	20	UK
Media professionals		
Newspapers	5	UK/Jamaica
Radio	5	UK/Jamaica
Rastafari members	10	UK/Jamaica
Maroons members	10	Jamaica
Kumina members	10	Jamaica

Observations

Nine nights	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Funeral services	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Funeral graveside services	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Funeral receptions	5-10	UK/Jamaica
Memorial Services	3-5	UK/Jamaica
Tombing	3-5	Jamaica

Sampling as a technique

'The basic principle of sampling is that it is possible to produce accurate findings without the need to collect data from each and every member of a survey "population".

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