Number 137

LABOR NEEDS AND ETHNIC RIPENING
IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION

Sidney W. Mintz
The Johns Hopkins University

1984

ABSTRACT

Labor Needs and Ethnic Ripening in the Caribbean Region

The paper offers a brief description of the history and sociology
of the Caribbean region, against which to project a discussion of
ethnicity or ethnic difference. The paper's contention is that Carib-
bean ethnicity, while certainly not unique, has a distinctive character
because of the peculiar economic and political history of the region
and the position of migrant labor within that history. Limited upward
mobility in subtropical, colonial societies devoted mainly to large-
scale plantation agriculture probably had the effect of intensifying
some aspects of ethnicity, rather than absorbing differences within a
more monolithic class solidarity.

LABOR NEEDS AND ETHNIC RIPENING
IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION[1]

Sidney Mintz
Johns Hopkins University

Our recently celebrated bicentennial has already begun to gather dust, its memory assuming the form of sullen dialogues about the leaky roof of Washington's Union Station and kindred plaints. But if they wish, those with a broader view can take comfort in the approach of yet another momentous marker, this one mid-millennial. Even if we choose to leave open the door for venturesome Norsemen, misarranged sailors off shipwrecked Chinese junks and other potential claimants, for most purposes we can assume that 1492 was the year of the Discovery. It matters little, in fact, that the people who were here already--more than 57 millions of them, by recent, wildly over-generous estimates[2]-- knew that they were here, and not somewhere else. By "discovering" a world the existence of which was previously unknown to them, the Europeans were also discovering themselves.

Francisco López de Gomara, dedicating his Hispania Victrix to Emperor Charles the Fifth, put the Discovery into European perspective. "Your Excellency," he wrote, "the most significant event after the Creation of the World, setting aside only the incarnation and death of our Savior, is the Discovery of the Indies, or what is called The New World."[3] Historian Richard Konetzke was not quite so unbridled, but he recognized that the Discovery meant a massive global shift for Europe. The "thalassic" or Mediterranean center of Europe's world was soon swiftly to be replaced by an "oceanic" or Atlantic center; planetary empires, spanning oceans, were created for the first time.[4] Lévi-Strauss tells us humankind (meaning here European humankind), by the Discovery, had been given one chance to redeem itself--and had lost it. "Because being human," he writes:

> means for each of us belonging to a class, to a society,
> to a country, and even to a continent and to a civiliza-
> tion, and because as Europeans and inhabitants of the
> earth, the journey into the heart of the New World means,
> above all, that it was not ours and that we bear the guilt
> for its destruction, and furthermore that there will be no
> other--sobered by these realizations, let us at least know
> how to describe them in their essential terms, from the
> perspective of one place and of a time when our world had
> already lost the chance that had been offered it to choose
> its destiny.[5]

The first part of the New World to feel the full impact of European power was the Caribbean region, particularly the Greater Antilles. The critical consequence of that impact was the almost complete elimination

of the indigenous peoples themselves and the entire destruction of their ancestral cultures. Plant and place names, some food and medicinal plants, and other aboriginal cultural materials still figure in Caribbean life; the genes of some of those aborigines are carried in the germ plasm of many Caribbean people today; and a small Carib Indian reservation of dubious status still exists on Dominica. But the vibrant and varied cultures of the estimated nearly six million inhabitants of the islands are gone, as are those inhabitants.[6] In their place there are now perhaps almost five times as many people, their origins immensely diverse. In the Caribbean islands and for the first time on a grand scale, the different states of Europe, themselves in continuous transition from their own feudal pasts, carved up a non-European region into their possessions, then launched those possessions upon satellite careers.

This grand transformation involved peoples from many different regions and cultures, in addition to the surviving Native Americans who figured in such processes. African, European, and Asian, they were all radically affected by transplantation and by contact; and the emergent island societies were strikingly different from those from which their people had come. They were different culturally, because they involved different "mixes" of ancestral populations under new conditions; they were different politically, because of their dependent, subordinate relationship to the European metropolises; they were different socially, since they evolved from no earlier state in situ, but were instead "constructed" by Europe from their own diverse origins, designed and perceived as adjuncts to the European momentum.

It would be impractical to offer here a lengthy analysis of the populations that have figured in Caribbean demography over the centuries, but at least something must be said of the diversity of its peopling. The first such stream to consider is the African. In his pathbreaking study of the African diaspora, Curtin provides an estimated total of the enslaved Africans shipped to the New World of between eight and ten and one-half millions. (His "exact" figure for the New World is 9,066,100.)[7] In a recent review of ongoing research on this subject since the publication of Curtin's book, Lovejoy suggests that the total figure should be somewhat higher--just under ten millions--though still falling within Curtin's upper and lower limits.[8] Lovejoy sees his revision as firm confirmation of Curtin's work.

Of the total number of people involved, the Caribbean islands (and certain small portions of the mainland) probably received close to one-third of those Africans forcibly shipped. By later estimates that would be a figure probably in excess of three million for the whole history of the New World trade (ca. 1500-1870). If one entirely excludes all of the mainland for statistical convenience, even though certain parts of it really "belong" with the archipelago, one is left to ponder the fact that the islands--these tiny bits of land, with a surface area totalling less than some 55,000 square miles--were the recipients of approximately three million enslaved Africans during the nearly four centuries of the trade. That movement was neither regular nor evenly distributed; the apogee appears to have been the eighteenth century, and the principal center of activity shifted from British

Jamaica to French Saint-Domingue to Spanish Cuba, over time, while the Danish and Dutch and French Antilles, as well as the Guianas, also received large numbers. Central to the demographic picture is the fact that the Spanish islands did not become world producers of tropical commodities until the late eighteenth century; though Spain was the first to the New World, she was last to develop large-scale plantations. Hence the hispanophone societies are noteworthy—together with certain peripheral localities too dry, too mountainous, or too small to have become plantation producers—for having developed large populations of non-African "creoles" early in their postcontact history.

In those areas in which European-initiated economic development on a slave labor basis was feasible, the African component was added with an intensity which gives special meaning to such overseas enterprise. To note only some of the more spectacular cases—and using Curtin's more conservative estimates—in the period 1701-1810, the British colony of Barbados, only 166 square miles in area, received 252,500 African slaves. During the same 109 years, Jamaica received 662,400 slaves. The French colonies of Saint-Domingue and Martinique, whose growth as slave-based plantation colonies paralleled that of the British islands, received 789,700 slaves, and 258,300 slaves, during the same period. For people like ourselves, raised in a world with a population of five billion and familiar now with wars in which twenty million are lost by one power while six million are roasted alive by another, statistics on slavery are not as impressive as they were when they were being put in the records. All the more reason to stress that we are talking about the eighteenth century, and about a transatlantic trade. These four colonies—Jamaica, Saint-Domingue, Martinique, and Barbados—were soaking up among them 18,000 new slaves a year during this 109-year period. The military and commercial activity entailed and profited from, that early in the rise of the modern world economy, should give us pause, for what was going on in the Caribbean islands obviously mattered greatly to the Europeans.

Enslaved Africans were not the only Africans to come to the Caribbean, however. Though they came mainly to the anglophone possessions, free Africans also ended up there in substantial numbers: about 31,921 to the British islands, about 16,000 to the French, during the concluding decades of the slave trade. These people had actually been "liberated" from the trade, and were then required to migrate as indentured laborers,[9] or else were recruited from villages in Sierra Leone where they had ended up after enslavement, liberation, and resettlement. This practice occurred mainly between the end of slavery in the British West Indies (1838) and the late 1860s, when such movement ceased entirely.

The end of slavery initiated movements among the planters in the anglophone islands to import technically free contracted labor for the plantations. The largest and lengthiest such immigration was of Indian workers, who came to the British Caribbean colonies in hundreds of thousands, and in smaller numbers to the French and Dutch Caribbean colonies. In all, between 1838 and 1917, the British colonies received about 430,000 Indians. Martinique and Guadeloupe received an estimated 70,000 Indians; the Dutch colony of Suriname nearly 35,000. There was

some repatriation among the Indian migrants; but in no instance did more than a third of those who migrated return home, and usually far fewer.

Next most significant was the migration of Chinese, most of whom were brought on contracts to Cuba (but also to British Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guiana, and to the French islands), particularly during the period 1853-1874. The total number may have reached 150,000, and all but ten percent went to Cuba; the number repatriated was derisory. Two other such movements of Asians bear mention here, though the numbers involved are modest. Between 1890 and 1931, the Dutch imported a total of some 33,000 Javanese to Suriname, about a quarter of whom eventually were repatriated. The French islands also received perhaps as many as 500 persons from French Indo-China.

All of the migrants referred to above are, in the popular European view, "nonwhite" (though old-fashioned anthropology would have labeled many of them "Caucasian"). Hence, it is important to add here that the islands also received a substantial number of white immigrants as well, destined for plantation labor--even though in aggregate totals their numbers are dwarfed by those for other groups. Two countries in particular supplied such migrants: Spain and Portugal. Most Portuguese came from Madeira, and most went to British Guiana, but a few went to other anglophone possessions; in the period 1835-1882, about 40,000 Portuguese came to the British Caribbean. The migration of Spaniards destined for the canefields is more difficult to estimate. But movements of several hundred Catalonians and Canary Islanders to Cuba in the 1830s was followed by a similar but much more numerous emigration toward the end of the century. Thousands of Canary Islanders joined the plantation work force in Cuba in the 1870s; and in the period 1882-1895, about 80,000 Spaniards arrived there. They "did not take kindly," writes Laurence, "to a fourteen-hour working day at low wages."[10] Neither did any of the other migrants. But once in the islands, most people found their opportunities to choose somewhat constricted.

Even American Indians participated in this inflowing labor migration to the Caribbean. At the end of the so-called Caste War in Yucatán in 1849, rebellious Maya Indians were sent ("deported" would be accurate) to Cuba. Others followed, and in all, about 2,000 such unfortunates ended up in Cuban canefields. There were many other relatively minor emigrations, most probably lost to history. They attest, as do the more massive movements, to the steady pressure for additional labor exerted by the planter classes throughout the region. "For many years," Raymond Smith tells us:

> the planters of British Guiana had attempted to attract
> labor or to buy slaves from the other West Indian ter-
> ritories and they persisted in these attempts right
> through the nineteenth century, often against the stren-
> uous opposition of the island planters. In 1835 one
> planter imported some Germans on a four-year contract;
> English ploughmen with their ploughs and horses [!] were
> also introduced; in the same year 429 Portuguese arrived

from Madeira; in 1836, 44 Irish and 47 English labourers were imported; in 1837, 43 labourers from Glasgow; in 1838, 396 persons arrived from India; in 1839, 208 Maltese and 121 Germans were landed....[11]

It was the succession of such events that helped to make these Caribbean colonies so different from each other, even though they were --in terms of the underlying forces which brought people from everywhere to them--startingly similar in their basic social and political design.

That similarity in "design" is a structural product of the role of tropical agricultural dependencies of the Caribbean kind in European history. Though these colonies produced several different commodities, among them tobacco, indigo, coffee, cotton, and some spices, their principal product during most of their postcontact history was sugar, and its derivatives molasses and rum. Between the 1640s, when Britain's first Caribbean colony, Barbados, began to produce sugar, and the mid-nineteenth century, when the protective tariffs for West Indian sugar began to be discarded at home, the consumption of sugar in the metropolis rose from an insignficant quantity to levels previously unmatched anywhere in the world. In 1700, the so-called "groceries" category of British imports (tea, coffee, sugar, rice, pepper, etc.) made up 16.9 percent of imports by value. By 1800, they represented 34.9 percent:

None of the other eight groups exceeded six percent of total imports in 1800. Among grocery items brown sugar and molasses were most prominent. They made up, by official value, two-thirds of the group in 1700 and two-fifths in 1800.... English sugar consumption probably increased about four-fold in the last four decades of the next century and more than doubled again from 1741-45 to 1771-75. If it is assumed that one-half of the sugar imports were retained in 1663, the consumption of England and Wales increased about twenty-fold in the period from 1663 to 1775. The fact that the population increased from 4-1/2 million to only 7-1/2 million in the same period is indicative of a marked increase in per capita consumption.[12]

Actual per capita consumption figures for England are unreliable for earlier centuries, but Deerr[13] estimates them as follows:

Years	Pounds
1700-1709	4
1720-1729	8
1780-1789	12
1800-1810	18

Probably the first luxury to be transformed into a necessity, sugar epitomizes the special relationship between tropical colony and European metropolis, and was a powerful link between the forced labor

of the islands and the free labor of the rising urban centers of the West.[14] As such, its metropolitan market, once secured, had to be supplied uninterruptedly. By the start of the nineteenth century, the odd fact that sugar shortages during wars could even cause riots at home was already being confirmed in Europe itself. The key to a secure supply was having one's own tropical dependencies, and the sustentation of their particular system for producing commodities like sugar.

The Caribbean plantation form was pioneered by the Spaniards in Santo Domingo and in Brazil by the Portuguese, early in the sixteenth century. The form itself was transferred to some large extent from the Atlantic islands of these two powers (São Thomé, Madeira, the Canary Islands, etc.), where it partly mimicked even earlier plantations in the eastern and western Mediterranean (Cyprus, Sicily, southern Spain, southwestern Morocco, etc.). Spain first brought the sugar cane to the New World from the Canary Islands, and grew it in Española during the first decade of the sixteenth century; Spain first imported enslaved Africans to cut and grind the cane, and sugarmakers from the Canaries to produce sugar. In short, Spain led the way in creating sugar plant- ations. But paradoxically, the real Caribbean sugar pioneer would be England, almost 150 years later. That first English sugar, however, was made from cane grown in Barbados and processed there under Dutch tutelage, with Dutch know-how and Dutch capital. It began to reach England in ever-increasing quantities from the mid-1650s onward. The French, the Dutch, and the Danes engaged in parallel enterprises. All foresaw, though with varying assurance and power, an ever-expanding market for their sugar, molasses, and rum. This seemingly insatiable European appetite for sugar lent to plantation development--and to the slave trade and slavery--its peculiar dynamism and thrust, and it did so on an international scale.

But that is not the whole story. The Caribbean islands had be- come empty lands through the virtual extirpation of their native popu- lations. Without people, the islands had no developmental potential for their European conquerors. The nature of the sugar cane, as well as the particular techniques of sugar making, require not only a pleni- tude of labor, but strict labor discipline as well. Sugar cane grows rapidly from planted cuttings--up to an inch a week--and reaches its optimum ripeness in from about 12 to 18 months. "Optimum" means here a maximum of juice content or--as later scientific sophistication demon- strated--a maximum of sucrose content in the juice. At optimum ripeness, cane must be promptly cut; once cut, it must be promptly ground, or it loses its juice. The unavoidably close connection between cutting and grinding makes necessary a coordination of field and factory schedules. It is for these reasons that sugar plantation organization had had an industrial cast from the very first. It is, moreover, the need for discipline, attributable in some measure to the inherent nature of the cane, that has given the plantation its semi-military and semi-indus- trial character. And it was these needs in turn, together with the consumption history of plantation commodities in the metropolises, that help to explain the checkered history of labor migration offered in the preceding pages.

If the eighteenth century was the apogee of Caribbean slavery, the nineteenth was the century of the transition to free labor. The succession of migrations discussed above begins, naturally enough, with the destruction of the aborigines, and the rise of the African slave trade. In the nineteenth century, however, that trade and slavery itself came under fire, and the ensuing migrations were arranged to make possible a transition to free labor, as one after another European power ended slavery in its colonies. Sir W. Arthur Lewis has written imaginatively about the demography of the nineteenth century. Between 1800 and 1900, he tells us, approximately one hundred million persons emigrated transoceanically, nearly all of them in search of work.[15]

But that migration consisted of two different segments. Nearly equal in scale, these two segments are readily distinguishable. One such segment involved some fifty million Europeans, especially Irishmen, Italians, and East European Jews, but also Englishmen, Germans, Poles, Russians, Swedes, Danes, Frenchmen, Greeks, and other Europeans. This was, among other things, a movement of white people. Most of them went to nontropical areas, such as the "southern cone" of Latin America, South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

The other segment, of course, consisted of fifty million non-Europeans including Africans, Indians, Chinese, Indo-Chinese, Javanese, Melanesians, etc., migrating during the same century. Unlike the Europeans, who went mostly to temperate countries, these people went mostly to tropical countries. Moreover, the countries to which they went in most cases, like the countries from which they came, were colonial. In this regard, too, the streams of migration were quite different from each other. Indeed, the European stream might be called "intersovereign"; the non-European stream was firmly "intercolonial." This latter was in effect the rearrangement of colonial nonwhite populations according to changing labor and production conditions within the colonial world, as the European metropolises had defined and created those conditions. Not surprising, then, that the Javanese went to Dutch Suriname, many Indians from French India to Martinique, many Indians from British India to British Guiana, and so on. Through these divided movements and the analysis of their meaning, the world division of labor as it operated inside the world economy at the time can be better apprehended.

The causes of this fundamental division into temperate and tropical, white and nonwhite, colonial and sovereign, are immensely complicated, even if their broad causal outlines can be agreed upon. Lewis sees the basic cause of the dichotomy as the differential agricultural productivity of the countries of origin. Because the people-exporting countries, both European and non-European, could not provide incomes in conformance with the efforts of their citizens, they lost population. But the differential agricultural productivity of such exporting countries determined the direction and intensity of the demographic flow. The economic opportunities available in a colony like Jamaica, for instance, were simply not sufficiently attractive, Lewis argues, to lead to a mass movement there from Ireland, say, or Italy. Yet relative to the levels of agricultural productivity in countries like

India and China, the Caribbean islands were able to attract Indian, Chinese, Javanese, African, Indo-Chinese, and other migrants—including, as we have seen, some Portuguese and Spanish laborers as well.

Correct or not, Lewis's formulation provides a provocative basis for examining the Caribbean cases which, in areal terms, probably display as much cultural diversity as any other part of the modern world. That diversity is not, as we have seen, uniformly shared; nor is it a diversity based on some single trait or cluster of traits. The Barbadian novelist George Lamming says it well:

> When the Indian team takes the field at Lords, it is a team of Indians. Some are short and some are tall; but they look alike. When the Australian team takes the field at Lords, it is a team of Australians.... But when a West Indian team takes the field at Lords...what do we see? Short and tall, yes; but Indian, Negro, Chinese, White, Portuguese mixed with Syrian. To the English eye...the mixtures are as weird and promising as the rainbow. And the combination of the team is not a political gimmick. That is...in fact, the West Indian situation.[16]

Hence in the Caribbean one is dealing with a racially and culturally heterogeneous area composed of many different societies, each differentially differentiated. What is meant by ethnicity in such situations?

One may anticipate future arguments slightly here by claiming that a cross-culturally valid definition of ethnicity has only limited analytical value, because what ethnicity is, is so much a coefficient of what is both happening, and possible, in the total social structure within which the ethnos exists. But such relativism should not make social science generalization impossible. It starts from the assumption that Puerto Ricans in Hawaii, New York City, and the Virgin Islands are not exactly the same Puerto Ricans[17]; that Afro-Americans in Trinidad and Afro-Americans in Detroit are not exactly the same Afro-Americans; and that without attending to the social, economic, and political context, most claims about ethnicity are likely to lose force, not gain it, by comparison.

But it may be useful, then, to say rather more about the social structures of Caribbean societies themselves, for these are the matrices within which Caribbean ethnic groups took on, and maintain, their distinctive characters. The assertions concerning the plantation system and its steady thirst for more labor power hold for the Caribbean region quite steadily from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. Only since the end of World War II has this thirst of 450 years become slaked, and by no means altogether. Its opposite side is the intensified—and intensifying—movement of Caribbean peoples outward, to the metropolises from which their rulers came, rather than to their ancestors' lands of origin. But over the course of more than four centuries, the islands and their surrounding mainland shores were the seat of important ethnic movement. Those who came from elsewhere

were able to retain only certain dimensions of their ancestral cultures, and these were transmitted and reinvested with meaning in the new settings. Once in the New World, these migrants adapted themselves to those others among whom they now lived, and to the curious political and economic linkages that typified the relationships between their adopted homelands and the European centers of power.

John Stuart Mill, commenting halfway through the nineteenth century upon the relationship between colonies and metropolises, expressed in illuminating terms the peculiar connection between them:

> There is a class of trading and exporting communities, on which a few words of explanation seem to be required. These are hardly to be looked upon as countries, carrying on an exchange of commodities with other countries, but more properly as outlying agricultural or manufacturing estates belonging to a larger community. Our West Indian colonies, for example, cannot be regarded as countries, with a productive capital of their own.... The West Indies...are the place where England finds it convenient to carry on the production of sugar, coffee and a few other tropical commodities. All the capital employed is English capital; almost all the industry is carried on for English uses; there is little production of anything except the staple commodities, and these are sent to England, not to be exchanged for things exported to the colony and consumed by its inhabitants, but to be sold in England for the benefit of the proprietors there. The trade with the West Indies is hardly to be considered an external trade, but more resembles the traffic between town and country....[18]

But of course the economic intimacy between the colony and the metropolis was a matter quite separate from legal and political considerations. The countries of the Caribbean, with the exception of Haiti, which won its independence in 1804, and Santo Domingo, which became independent in 1844, were all politically dependent until the twentieth century. Hence Mill's comments are background to the somewhat unusual social and political arrangements that ties these colonies to their motherlands.

Small classes of Europeans, more or less in exile, used slaves and contracted laborers in large numbers to produce desired tropical commodities for export to the European centers. Granting the superficiality of generalizations of this sort, they are nonetheless defensibly accurate and they hold for nearly all Caribbean societies (with the possible exception of Haiti and Spanish Santo Domingo), until long after the end of slavery (Denmark 1859, England 1838, France 1848, the Netherlands 1863, Puerto Rico 1876, Cuba 1886).

The political arrangements typical of the Caribbean colonies had two major consequences. First, they meant that local inhabitants would have no say in regard to the introduction of additional worker populations from elsewhere. Hence the Guianese freedmen, for instance,

had no power to oppose the introduction of nearly a quarter of a mil-
lion Indian contract laborers after 1838.

Second, they meant that local inhabitants would have little or
no political voice as to taxation or the use of funds raised by local
governments for the planters' purposes. Thus, to give again but one
relevant example, Knox[19] has shown how the Jamaica tax system was con-
tinuously revised after Emancipation to bear more heavily upon the
freedman cultivator, and less upon the plantations, in regard both to
import and export levies.[20] Property qualifications systematically
discriminated against the peasantry. In some cases, tax receipts from
the small-scale freedman farmers were even used to pay the costs of
importing additional labor, with which to degrade the wage levels on
the estates!

But beyond the inability of local inhabitants to affect the tax
systems or to limit or oppose the importation of additional labor,
Caribbean economies themselves were marked by generally low rates of
growth and little innovation. This assertion is shallow, but it is
not very wide of the mark. Societies such as Jamaica, Martinique,
British Guiana, and Cuba were poor, agrarian, and colonial in the
nineteenth century, much as they had been in the seventeenth. Among
the consequences of their laggard growth, working people in them could
not look forward to much in the way of expanded economic or educational
opportunities for their children. Upward mobility—to use the term
used so often in this country to describe the success of the "teeming
masses"—was rare in the Caribbean region. The children of cane cut-
ters cut cane. The grandchildren of cane cutters cut cane, too.

Most of the settings into which migrants moved were plantation
settings, where differential individual skills relevant to that economy
were difficult both to acquire and to market, and where the utility of
previously acquired knowledge was usually slight. The social struc-
tures of these colonial societies were both hierarchical and quite
rigid, while providing little opportunity for self-improvement, either
economic or educational. In short, and except in regard to their
ability to soak up large quantities of poorly-paid labor, these soci-
eties were firmly closed. Hence they pose a provocative contrast to
these societies into which most of the European migrants moved, such
as Canada, Argentina, and the United States. In these societies,
while the need for large quantities of poorly-paid labor was also
chronic, both the preexisting political structure and a sturdy racism
constrained to some degree the ability of the employer classes to ad-
mit unlimited numbers of new laborers. At the same time, the socio-
economic structures provided some opportunity (often, much opportunity)
for self-improvement and upward movement. The contrast is quite marked,
even if the over-broad scale of the argument here generalizes the dif-
ferences dangerously.

All this, of course, by way of background to the issue of ethnic-
ity. No reference to physical differences between groups has been
made so far, except to point out that the prevailing flow to the Carib-
bean and other tropical areas was nonwhite, in contrast to the prevail-
ing flow to the temperate belt; and no definition of ethnicity has been

offered. Hence some stab at definitions is called for here. Discussions of ethnicity in recent years have been concerned both with ethnic boundaries (the divisions between groups) and with the stuff of cultural difference (the content of behavior). Barth's emphasis on boundaries and boundary-maintenance, his searching questions about how much cultural content may be modified, while leaving a group's members just as distinguishably different from outsiders, is provocative:

> The cultural features that signal the boundary may change, and the cultural characteristics of the members may likewise be transformed, indeed, even the organizational form of the group may change--yet the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content.[21]

Barth is not contending here that cultural features are unimportant or irrelevant to ethnic definition or self-definition--only that such features may vary over time, without the group losing its distinctive identity. Barth's approach and recent interest in the political meanings of ethnicity have led investigators away from an older anthropological concern with cultural content for its own sake toward a definition of ethnicity that includes interaction with other groups as an essential part of the definition itself. Wallerstein says:

> Any 'ethnic' group exists only to the extent that it is asserted to exist at any given point in time by the group itself and by the larger social network of which it is a part. Such groups are constantly created and re-created; they also constantly 'cease to exist'; they are thus constantly redefined and change their form at amazingly fast rates. Yet through the physical maelstrom, some 'names' maintain a long historical continuity because at frequent intervals it has been in the interest of the conscious elements bearing this 'name' to reassert the heritage, revalorize the mythical links, and socialize members into the historical memory.[22]

Ethnicity is not a phantasm, the result of an act of sheer imagination; but its peculiar and particular expression in the form of claims--ethnicity _for_ something--is the precipitate of wider forces, acting in conjunction upon the awareness of people for whom some aspects of their preexisting likeness have become sociologically relevant.[23]

Such a view of ethnicity--ethnicity _for_ something--is quite different from the older anthropoligical conceptions of "culture" and "subculture." It attaches political implications to ethnicity; it takes for granted that what is meant by "ethnic" comes into view only when groups of differing culture are somehow interacting with each other. Though some keenly analytical anthropologists have privately suggested that ethnicity is really nothing more than kinship combined with culture--implying thereby that the concept itself is superfluous

--most students of ethnicity believe they are studying something additional. Yet it does seem accurate to claim that the "something additional" is frequently visible because it is political. "Ethnicity," writes Abner Cohen "is essentially a form of interaction between culture groups operating within common social contexts."[24]

> One way to make a start is to analyze ethnicity in terms of interconnections with economic and political relationships, both of which I shall, for brevity, describe as political. One need not be a Marxist in order to recognize the fact that the earning of livelihood, the struggle for a larger share of income from the economic system, including the struggle for housing, for higher education, and for other benefits, and similar issues constitute an important variable significantly related to ethnicity. Admittedly it is not the only relevant variable. What is more its operation is modified and affected by processual and psychological factors... But it is a variable that pervades almost the whole universe of social relationships. This holds true even of so-called domestic relationships, which some writers seem to exclude from the realm of politics. Relations like those between father and son or husband and wife have their own aspects of power, and thus form part of the political system in any society.[25]

Of course, much more could be said concerning the concept of ethnicity, and particularly concerning its application to the Caribbean region. But perhaps these remarks will have made clear, at least, that we are supposing some demonstration is possible of a connection between a corpus of behavior or cultural features (Barth's "diacritica" or "cultural stuff"), and a boundable group or community, interacting with other such groups in one society.

There is deliberate vagueness in writing merely of "some connection" between group and behavior, of course. But there is need to free discussions of ethnicity from any view of the unchangingness or unchangeability of ethnic materials, or of their symbolic meanings, and to consider such materials from a more dynamic perspective. Moving in the direction of a more flexible view of ethnicity can, of course, mean eventually despairing of the concept entirely. One of the more imaginative thinkers about Caribbean ethnic groups, Drummond, eventually concluded that there is no such thing as "a culture" (and hence no such thing as an ethnos), only a global culture. Ethnicity, then, becomes the symbolic manipulation of certain portions of a cultural continuum.[26]

This interpretation, which the late Chandra Jayawardena considered to be a "useful descriptive device,"[27] nicely stresses the changing nature of ethnic identity. It raises the possibility that persons may have the ability and the opportunity to alter their ethnic status, almost from day to day, and suggests that the essential component of ethnicity is the ideological, symbolically-generated material through which people actualize or suspend their membership. Gregory, writing

of an ethnic boundary problem in Belize (former British Honduras)
writes:

> I would urge that we take a more 'neutral' stance in the
> analysis of intergroup boundaries. Such boundaries are
> complex phenomena; they are also potentially very fluid.
> They may or may not involve significant cultural or in-
> stitutional differences...over time, they may come into
> existence, be maintained, break down, or disappear...
> they may become more flexible or more rigid...they may
> be impermeable for the members of the groups involved
> (as in situations of apartheid), or may permit an inter-
> group flow of personnel...institutional differentiation
> may occur without the development of ethnic differenti-
> ation...boundary maintenance and modification may be
> going on simultaneously in different sectors within the
> same ethnic institutional arena...and so on.[28]

This fluidity or changeability within multiethnic situations,
which certainly does seem more and more characteristic of the modern
world, goes far beyond older ideas of the "one culture equals one
society" sort, once so common in anthropology.[29]

But analogy between a linguistic continuum and an ethnic contin-
uum, as proposed by Drummond, also suffers from some deficiencies.
In recent years the phenomenon of language has been repeatedly invoked
by anthropologists in theorizing about nonlinguistic phenomena; the
results vary from the spectacular to the wholly spurious. In the
Caribbean region, the character and dynamism of ethnicity surely has
to be linked to the existing distribution of power and wealth in the
society within which it is being studied, if it is to be fully under-
stood. Variations in the intensity of ethnicity, in its "staying
power," are coefficients of other forces, and cannot be cut off from
their social, economic, and political context.

The problem is different when we turn from "cultural" diacritica
to physical differences. Allow a cartographic conjecture: a map of
the phenotypic--that is, "visible racial"--distribution of peoples
within the Caribbean region. Such a map would, of course, show us
that there are Caribbean societies in which the numbers of peoples
of African origin were small, and others in which nearly everyone ap-
peared to be of African origin, at least in some measure. Contrasts
between societies such as Haiti or Jamaica, on the one hand, with
societies like Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic on the other,
would be suggestive. The same would be true with peoples of other,
different physical backgrounds. But such a map--even if it could be
drawn, and it cannot--would be of only trivial usefulness. If we
know anything at all about social relationships in the Antilles, we
know that each society has its own culturally-conventionalized per-
ceptions of physical appearance. Such normative perceptions are dif-
ficult to document and to describe:

> Perception of color is not simply a matter of observed
> phenotype but of observed phenotype taken together with

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many other factors... Individual judges within a society,
when speaking of the color of any other individual, may be
hardly conscious of the criteria they are using or of any
priorities they may be giving to some criteria over others
in making their judgments. Moreover, there is some reason
to suppose that perception of an individual's color may
vary from time to time and from situation to situation,
even when the same person is making the judgment. Such
variation may be unconscious for the most part, and may
hinge not only upon the judged individual's social status
or behavior, but also upon the judge's conception at any
given time of his own physical appearance, social status,
and behavior relative to that of the man he is judging.[30]

The superimposition of North American or European popular con-
cepts of "race" classification upon Caribbean social realities guar-
antees an incorrect analysis of the sociological significance of
physical differences within these societies. Allow, then, yet another
cartographic conjecture, this one a map of perceived "race." Again,
of course, such a map cannot be drawn; he who could draw it for the
Caribbean region would be the master Caribbean social scientist of
the epoch. Some writers have indeed contributed to our understanding
of what such a map might be like;[31] but for the present, it remains
largely an act of imagination.

Yet a third map--we might as well imagine them to be transparen-
cies, capable of being superimposed upon one another--would be a map
of ethnic divisions. Even to imagine such a map is to run counter to
the stress here upon the fluidity and relativity of ethnic groups and
boundaries. Yet for the purposes of my present argument, it is useful
to add such a map--more infeasible in practice, even, than the maps
preceding. A fourth such map might deal with language, special atten-
tion being paid to those Caribbean populations which speak two or more
languages, rather than one, and for which the social contexts for the
use of one language rather than another might be specified. One thinks
here of Haiti, for instance, where approximately 95 percent of the
population is monolingual in Creole, while 5 percent is bilingual in
Creole and French; or of Curaçao, where substantially all inhabitants
are bilingual in Papiamento and Dutch, but the circumstances for the
use of one language or the other differ noticeably. In some of the
erstwhile French colonies, subsequently ceded to England, such as St.
Lucia and Dominica, French-based Creole is still very important, though
English has gradually supplemented (or supplanted) Creole. In other
erstwhile British colonies, such as Jamaica, dialect differences are
very noticeable, and many persons are "bi-dialectal," using one or the
other dialect according to situation. (It is in viewing such situa-
tions as continuums that the analogy with ethnicity locates itself.)
By specifying the social contexts for language use, one gets at the
instrumental structure of social groupings within the society, and
these data, together with data on ethnicity, "race," and perceived
color, would afford us a multidimensional view of the societies in
question--a view no one such "map" could possibly give us.

Finally, then, we may imagine a map of social position, based on economic, social, political, and other features of status attribution. Such a final map would be more than just a means of locating persons within social systems--it would also be, if sufficiently detailed, a map of power. Power, as used here, has to do with all of the other dimensions of position and status we have already tried to take into account; race and perceived race, ethnicity, language, and accompanying distribution of various kinds of status prerogatives.

Ideally, of course, we would not superimpose our maps in order to arrive at a much more complete and accurate picture of the ethnosociology of Caribbean societies. But we do not have such maps. And even if we did, it is by no means certain that we could handle adequately the tough theoretical problems arising from our depictions. In other words, the "maps" we have conjured forth imply certain priorities of forces; yet we are in no position to argue confidently for one or another such <u>sequence</u> of forces, in determining precisely how power is allocated. Of course, we may impute confidently certain clusterings of power about wealth, whiteness, standard speech, higher education, etc.--but these clusterings simply allow us to begin to test our analyses, and do not conclude them. It is obviously no longer enough to say, for instance, that a rich black man is "white"; or that black bureaucracies have arisen upon the ruins of local white colonialism; or that different social segments manifest apparent subcultural differences expressed in behavior. Such popular insights will not suffice. If we mean seriously to understand how Caribbean societies operate in terms of the ways ethnic differences are perceived, acted out, and acted upon, our understanding must be rooted in specific studies of the social employment of contrast.

In the preceding passages use has been made of an imaginary device, and one which unfortunately tends to "freeze" categories, rather than to stress their fluid, open nature. Hence such conjectures tend to be somewhat misleading, as well as an exercise in futility. Yet they do dramatize the great diversity of Caribbean populations, and they do suggest some of the social dimensions--such as perceived physical differences, cultural features such as custom, costume, cuisine, and language--along which groups have claimed an ethnic identity, or have had it attributed to them by others. This brief discussion of ethnicity and physical difference has been situated within the context of Caribbean political and labor history, since it seems important to know under what conditions peoples from elsewhere arrived in the region, and into what kinds of "niches" they were to fit. Rather than discussing a particular case in detail, it seemed promising instead to provide some overview of the problem, and to suggest this writer's perspective in trying to solve it.

We are not in any secure position to contend that the most convincing sociological analysis of a Caribbean society will result from using class, rather than ethnicity (or ethnicity, rather than class) as a prior order of explanation. At the same time, the discussion of Caribbean ethnicity was prefaced by a description of the causes for labor importation to the Caribbean, since it was within the context of such migration that ethnic groups formed. This in no way detracts

from the obvious fact that Caribbean peoples came from elsewhere, "carrying" cultural materials, and built for themselves new--if very fluid--identities in their changed settings.

The writer has suggested elsewhere that most Caribbean societies, managed as they were by Europeans in exile, and worked by migrant groups of many backgrounds who had little opportunity to improve themselves, lacked central (national) traditions through which such migrant populations could mediate their relationships to each other.[32] This lack affected the emergence of an ethnically-based national consciousness--the so-called "identity crisis" attributed to Caribbean peoples-- but it has elicited from them a social innovativeness very much in tune with the modern world. Perceived differences in physical type or in cultural features have played a part in that innovativeness. In a moving story told in the first person by a Grenadian black man who becomes Trinidad's leading baker, V. S. Naipaul places both race and ethnicity into their distinctive Caribbean mold. Youngman, the hero, is apprenticed to a Chinese baker, then starts his own business. But no one will buy his bread, even though it is of superior quality. Youngman analyzes his failure, and discovers thereby the key to success:

> When black people in Trinidad go to a restaurant, they
> don't like to see black people meddling with their food.
> And then I see that though Trinidad have every race and
> every colour, every race have to do special things. But
> look, man. If you want to buy a snowball [flavored ice],
> who you buying it from? You wouldn't buy it from a
> Indian or a Chinee or a Potogee. You would buy it from
> a black man. And I myself when I was getting my place
> in Arouca fix up, I didn't employ Indian carpenters or
> masons. If a Indian in Trinidad decide to go into the
> carpentering business the man would starve. Who ever
> see a Indian carpenter?... And, look at the laundries.
> If a black man open a laundry, you would take your
> clothes to it? I wouldn't take my clothes there...
> And then all sorts of things fit into place. You remem-
> ber that the Chinee people didn't let me serve bread
> across the counter? I used to think it was because
> they didn't trust me with the rush. But it wasn't that.
> It was that, if they did let me serve, they would have
> no rush at all. You ever see anybody buying their bread
> off a black man?[33]

Having figured out something awfully important, Youngman cannily hires a young Chinese to stand in front of his shop, ostensibly reading a Chinese newspaper (though he cannot really read Chinese), hangs Chinese calendars inside the bakery, and changes his sign to read Yung Man instead of Youngman. Prospering, he concludes on a triumphant note:

> I never show my face in front of the shop again...my wife
> handling that side of the business, and the wife is
> Chinee... As I say, I only going in the shops from the

back. But every Monday morning I walking brave to Marine
Square and going in the bank, from the front.[34]

The baker's story tells us that Caribbean societies, when multi-
ethnic, are differentiated, among other things, in terms of ethnic
and/or "racial" expectations. Ethnic succession has eventuated in
being a valuable instrument of empire, even now when empires are go-
ing or going. It is not yet enough that class interests may be the
same; perceived ethnic and "racial" differences continue to divide
groups.[35] In the Caribbean region, which can be usefully treated as
a category or subclass of societies based on their historical rela-
tionships to European metropolises and the circumstances of their
peopling, the study of ethnicity and group modification is a vital
aspect of understanding their social, political, and economic futures.

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