

# THE CARIBBEANIZATION OF NEW YORK CITY AND THE EMERGENCE OF A TRANSNATIONAL SOCIOCULTURAL SYSTEM

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In the mid-1980s, New York has again become a city of immigrants. With over a third of its population now estimated to be foreign born,<sup>2</sup> the proportion of the city's newcomers has climbed to a high last recorded in 1900. Arriving mainly after 1965, this massive influx of new peoples coming primarily from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean has changed both the composition and culture of the city.<sup>3</sup> It has infused New York with a new energy, effervescence, and volatility and has further internationalized its famous ethnic and racial heterogeneity. New York is now a truly global city. Its third world outreach in the domain of corporate business, finance, and politics is mirrored in the presence of its large third world work force. These two phenomena, local expressions of the international circulation of capital and peoples that took off after World War II (*see*, Bonilla, 1986; Sassen-Koob, 1981), form interconnected parts of a single transnational system.

The impact of this system on New York City raises a number of important anthropological questions. What changes in the life of the city have resulted from the restructuring of its economy and the transformation of its popula-

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<sup>2</sup> This estimate includes both documented and undocumented immigrants, political refugees (*see*, Bogen, 1985), and Puerto Ricans, who as U.S. citizens are not considered "immigrants."

<sup>3</sup> Figures on the size of each of these groups residing in New York City vary considerably. The higher mid-1980s estimates put the size of the Asian population at around 500,000; Hispanics at about one and a half million (of whom 60 percent are Puerto Rican, with Dominicans the next largest group, followed by Colombians and other Latin Americans); and West Indians—English-speaking and Haitian-Creole speaking—at about 1 million (half of whom are Jamaicans). West Indians, referred to as "Afro-Caribbeans," and Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, referred to as "Hispanic-Caribbeans," constitute the population with which this book is concerned. They now number over 2 million of New York City's 7 million people.

tion? How have the different migrant streams been positioned within the city's economy and in its class, ethnic, and racial structures? How have the newcomers gone about reconstituting and remolding their cultural heritages? And, what effect has all this had on the city's cultural and political landscape?

The volume of articles supply partial answers to these questions for the largest stream of third world migrants to New York City, the Caribbeans. Although they have emigrated from virtually all the large and small islands in the Caribbean archipelago, it is the Puerto Ricans and Dominicans from the Hispanic Caribbean and the Jamaicans, Haitians, and Trinidadian/Tobagonians from the Afro-Caribbean regions<sup>4</sup> that form the largest and hence most visible Caribbeans.

But it is not just the magnitude of this Caribbean presence that is noteworthy. Caribbeans constitute a crucial case for considering how a past colonial history and contemporary U.S. political and economic domination of a region combine to structure the immigrant experience. Coming from the most intensely colonized of all third world regions, Caribbeans migrate to the metropolises to which their countries remain linked today by ties of inexorable economic and political dependency. The cultural penetration that is part of the domination of the region causes Caribbeans to have a foreknowledge of the culture they encounter as migrants as well as an ambivalence about their own heritages, which were denigrated under colonialism. They also bring the knowledge that comes from operating in steeply sloped class hierarchies, still partly based on race and color. Thus it is not surprising to find that issues of culture and politics inform how Caribbean migrants represent themselves in the country which today dominates their region.

One might expect then that the immigrant experiences of Caribbeans will differ in a number of ways from that of their European predecessors. For example, what effect does their African (or mixed African/European) ancestry have on the identities imposed on them and their placement in New York City's racial/ethnic hierarchies? How are their cultural traditions perceived

<sup>4</sup> The term "Afro-Caribbean" is used instead of "West Indian" or "non-Hispanic Caribbean" to create a parallel to the accepted term of "Hispanic Caribbean." Afro-Caribbean refers to the Anglophone, Francophone and Dutch-speaking regions of the Caribbean which share important similarities as islands whose historic baselines were the slave plantation economy and whose populations, overwhelmingly of African descent, created a submerged Afro-creolized folk culture distinct from the hegemonic Euro-creole forms maintained by their English, French, and Dutch colonial masters. This contrasts with the Hispanic Caribbean—Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico—where the historic baselines established by Spanish colonizing involved a more diversified settler economy onto which plantation slavery was later grafted. In these latter colonies there was greater mixing of peoples of Indian, African, and Spanish ancestry and a blending of their distinct traditions within a more culturally unitary though stratified social system in which peoples of Spanish descent and a creolized Spanish tradition were dominant. This does not mean that Afro-Caribbean cultural forms are not present and indeed celebrated in the Hispanic Caribbean. But the acknowledged African and Amerindian heritages are synthesized in a dominant Hispanic-Antillean cultural tradition rather than forming an identifiable creole folk culture practiced by the nonelite masses in the Afro-Caribbean region.

by New Yorkers and how do they view the city? What influence does their past experience as colonized peoples have on the identities they affirm? And of central importance to our current notions of immigrant assimilation and acculturation, how do their strong ties to their homelands influence the transfer and transformation of their cultural heritages?

In relation to these issues, four general points can be made concerning the new Caribbean presence in New York City.<sup>5</sup>

### **THE CARIBBEANIZATION OF NEW YORK CITY**

New York City is being Caribbeanized in a number of areas. In the city's economy, the labor power of Caribbean people has been critical to the complex restructuring and polarization of wealth that has been taking place since the 1970s (*see*, Bonilla and Campos, 1986; Freedman, 1979; Rodriguez, 1984; Sassen-Koob, 1985). Indeed, by offering themselves as a relatively low wage and flexible labor force, Caribbean migrants have made capital investment in the metropole attractive and profitable once more. Puerto Rican and now Dominican women have kept the garment industry from completely moving elsewhere. Afro-Caribbean women working as child caretakers and domestics have facilitated the pursuit of professional careers for a growing number of middle and upper class White women (*see*, Colen, 1986), thus filling the gap created by Black American women leaving this type of work. Caribbean women and men have provided much of the labor power for the expanded restaurant and taxi industries, as well as for the smaller sweatshops and home industries that have recently reemerged. The large growth in the service sector, particularly in the health care industries, has been made possible because of the relatively low wages Caribbean women will accept. And, along with Black Americans, Caribbeans are found concentrated in the city's federal, state, and municipal agencies—largest employers of "minority" people since the late 1960s. In addition, Caribbeans have expanded the informal sector of the economy, both licit and illicit, creating employment for themselves as they produce goods and services for their communities and the wider metropole, and participating in the international traffic in drugs and stolen car parts. Moreover, by using their labor and financial resources to engage in low-cost housing rehabilitation (*see*, Marshall, 1985; van Capelleveen, ms.), they have helped to maintain and restore the social and physical infrastructure in many areas of the city. Thus, in the midst of sharpened economic inequality, Caribbean migrants have been both critical

<sup>5</sup> Prior to World War II, New York City had a sizable Caribbean population, the result of earlier migrations which began around the turn of the century. By the 1930s, West Indians constituted between a fifth to a quarter of New York's Black population and Puerto Ricans numbered about 60,000 prior to World War II. But a new "critical mass" has been reached in the 1980s as a result of the size and scale of the post World War II migrations.

to the city's economy and successful in increasing their incomes beyond what they would earn in their home countries.

Caribbeanization of New York City is also manifest in the richness introduced into the city's life styles: new languages and public speech forms (*e.g.*, the widespread use of Spanish in public advertising and of Spanish, "Spanglish," and West Indian creoles in public places and plays); new Afro-Caribbean religious practices; new community and city-wide organizational activities; new mass media contents, public performances, use of public facilities and spaces; new programs and content in schools, museums, and public theaters; new popular arts, foods, music and dance; and finally, the new political struggles and issues being addressed—concerning bilingualism, community control of resources, educational content of school curricula, redlining and gentrification, welfare policies, and U.S. economic and political activity in the Caribbean.

Caribbean peoples have also brought with them the vivacity, color, rhythms, noises, and sociality that characterize island life. Despite secret cults and an often hidden quality to aspects of its folk culture, most of Caribbean social life is played out in public, not private, arenas. The transposition of this island heritage has meant that both the street life of local neighborhoods as well as the many public spaces of the city are being infused with Caribbean popular culture. A proliferation of Caribbean cultural forms has appeared throughout the city, from Reggae and Salsa concerts, Rastas and domino street players, graffiti and politicized street mural arts, to productions of the Caribbean Cultural Center, Joseph Papp's month-long summer Latino/Caribbean performances, and a growing number of Hispanic and Afro-Caribbean dance and theater groups.<sup>6</sup>

But it is not only New York City's popular culture that is being Caribbeanized. Caribbean peoples have also begun to make themselves felt in the city's institutions of "high" culture. Public and private universities have increasingly become centers where peoples of Caribbean origin—Hispanic and Afro-Caribbean—are producing new bodies of formal knowledge as they examine, codify, and theorize about their experiences and struggles.<sup>7</sup> In

<sup>6</sup> There is an upbeat quality to the profusion of Caribbean cultural forms that is occurring, paradoxically, as inequality in the city's economic and social structure has increased. While perhaps this is part of the ethnic diversity now being celebrated, it seems to illustrate the point Frank Bonilla has made about the need of capitalism as it internationalizes to identify "with the language and culture of those who people its market rather than with the ethnic attributes of its owners" (1986:79).

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the research being carried out within university departments and in the special programs devoted to Afro-American and Puerto Rican studies that have been introduced into higher education following the protests of Black and Puerto Rican students during the late 1960s, there now exist a number of university centers, such as the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, the Caribbean Research Center at Medgar Evers College, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University, where interdisciplinary research directed toward Caribbean communities and public policy is being conducted. The CUNY (City University of New York) Association of Caribbean Studies, which in 1985 began to publish the journal

this process a Caribbean presence is beginning to be asserted in the discourses of the city's overlapping elites.

### ***NEW YORK CITY AS A CARIBBEAN CROSS-ROAD***

New York City has become the Caribbean cross-roads of the world. It contains the largest concentration and most diverse commingling of its people. With a Caribbean population of two million (this figure includes Puerto Ricans), New York forms the largest Caribbean city in the world, ahead of Kingston, Jamaica, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, combined. It is in New York that the different islanders "cross-roads," learning about one another in their various encounters at work, in the streets, in schools and communities, at public affairs, and through the media. It is here that they have begun to build social bridges and alliances as they confront similar problems in their neighborhoods, the schools their children attend, their places of work, and the city at large. And it is in New York City that particular island identities become fused into broader ethnic identities: West Indian, pan-Caribbean, third world, Hispanic and Afro-American. These fused identities, often produced through ethnic mobilization for the staging of power politics, are expressed most clearly in cultural activities. The wider identities point to a growing consciousness of unifying perspectives and goals, and mark a sense of new possibilities in a struggle for cultural and political empowerment.

### ***THE CARIBBEAN TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL SYSTEM***

New York is a Caribbean cross-roads in yet another important sense, one that involves the transposition and production of cultural forms and ideology. Both Hispanics and Afro-Caribbeans reconstitute their lives in New York City by means of a "cross-roads" process created by the mutual interaction of happenings in New York and the Caribbean. In general contrast with the situation of European immigrants, New York's Caribbean population is exposed to a more continuous and intense bidirectional flow of peoples, ideas, practices, and ideologies between the Caribbean region and New York City. These bidirectional exchanges and interactions have generated what can be called a transnational sociocultural system, a distinctly unitary though not unified transmission belt that reworks and further creolizes Caribbean culture and identities, both in New York and the Caribbean.

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*Cimarron*, further testifies to the enormous expansion of scholarly interest in Caribbean life in the city and on the islands.

It is the emergence of this transnational sociocultural system which suggests that the model of immigrant/ethnic incorporation into a "culturally pluralistic" American society is not the destiny of migrant Caribbeans. For unlike most European immigrant/ethnic groups whose heritages became confined to their private, personal lives as they became incorporated into the economy and policy of U.S. society, the cultures and identities of Caribbean migrants are public, politicized issues. Moreover, Caribbean cultures are being replenished by the transnational system created by the continuing inflow of Caribbean peoples and by circular migration. This provides grounds for affirming a separate cultural identity. It is perhaps ironic that in the U.S. this affirmation of a separate Caribbean identity, especially among Puerto Ricans, is equated with a puzzling resistance to the process of becoming "Americanized,"<sup>8</sup> whereas in the Caribbean region there is concern with a loss of their distinctive Caribbean identities as the region has become increasingly "Americanized" both economically and culturally.

If the transnational system is influential in shaping Caribbean cultures and identities in New York City, so too is New York's race/class hierarchy into which Caribbeans are incorporated. We turn now to this significant factor in the immigrant experience.

### **CARIBBEANS IN NEW YORK CITY'S RACE/ETHNIC HIERARCHY**

An important aspect of the Caribbean presence is its relation to and impact on the city's racial/ethnic hierarchy. Unlike European immigrants who are ethnically differentiated by their national origins and secondarily by religious affiliation, Caribbean migrants are placed within one or the other of the city's two principal minority status categories—"Blacks" and "Hispanics."<sup>9</sup> Within these two categories, Black Americans and Puerto Ricans—the two groups whose earlier presence gave rise to these categories and who today form the largest percent of each category—have experienced the longest and most thorough process of being Americanized. Furthermore, for Black Americans and Puerto Ricans this process represents a reversal of the European immigrant experience. Instead of joining an American mainstream through gaining socioeconomic mobility, Black Americans and Puerto Ricans have experienced over time more downward than upward economic mobility, a general deskilling, cultural denigration, and continued separation from

<sup>8</sup> See, Safa, 1983 for discussion of the latter issue, and Prager, 1982 for an analysis of the resilient symbolic role of racist conceptions in American thought and as countercurrent to the dominant American cultural ideology.

<sup>9</sup> For discussions of the difference between racial and ethnic identities and their significance in U.S. society, see Mullings (1978); Sudarkasa (1983); and Sutton (1975). The issue is related to what some analysts have seen as a replication of colonial relations when formerly colonized populations migrate to the metropolises of Europe and the U.S.

the resources and rewards of "mainstream" society (Mullings, 1978; Rodriguez, 1984). Today, as in the past, they possess the lowest incomes and the highest school drop-out and unemployment rates in the city. Hence for Caribbeans, who are compared to and compare themselves to Black Americans and Puerto Ricans, there are few incentives to become Americanized into either of these low-status categories. Possessing both higher average incomes and higher social statuses than the two more Americanized populations with which they are associated, Caribbean peoples in New York City are not readily induced to shed their cultural heritages or separate island-based identities as they seek to further their socioeconomic status in New York.

On the other hand, the recent Afro-Caribbean and Hispanic immigrants have contributed in substantial ways to diversifying the U.S. racial/ethnic hierarchy as well as to U.S.-perceived images of Black and Hispanic peoples. Moreover, though the newer groups have benefited from distinguishing themselves from Black Americans and Puerto Ricans, they also know that they have benefited from the political struggles carried out by these two peoples whose insistent claims to equality and justice have strongly influenced, and sometimes radicalized, Caribbean immigrants. The struggles of Black Americans and Puerto Ricans have changed how Caribbeans think about their positions in U.S. society and their own countries, and about the value of the non-Western components of their creolized cultural heritages.

Thus, Caribbeans experience contradictory pressures in relation to their identities as Black and Hispanic peoples. This causes them to oscillate between particularistic island/ethnic identities and definitions of interests, and more generalized political/racial alliances in which joint demands are made on the municipal, state, and federal governments. What this implies for the future—politically, economically, and culturally—is a question of strategic significance not only to New York City, but also to the federal government and the Caribbean region.

### *SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF CARIBBEAN LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY: TOWARD A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS*

The preceding discussion notes both the impact of the Caribbean presence on New York and the wider context affecting the incorporation of Caribbeans in the city—namely, U.S.-Caribbean relations plus the compelling structure of New York City's racial/ethnic hierarchy. The dual-place orientations and identities resulting from the active ties Caribbeans maintain to their homelands while becoming New Yorkers has resulted in a transnational sociocultural system coming into being. How this system operates concretely with respect to the diverse groups of Caribbean immigrants in New York is

examined in the eighteen other essays in this volume written by 30 authors most of whom are anthropologists,<sup>10</sup> some of whom are of Caribbean origin or ancestry, and many of whom have conducted research in the archipelago. With a focus on sociocultural dimensions of Caribbean life in New York, the book addresses a topic that has been relatively neglected in the many recent studies of Caribbean immigrants. These studies which have examined the demographic characteristics, the sectors of the economy into which Caribbeans are incorporated, and their patterns of ethnic mobility, schooling and political participation, have been mainly concerned with assessing how well and in what ways Caribbean immigrants are integrating themselves into U.S. society. By contrast, the essays presented here analyze the culture of Caribbeans in New York City and its relation to life on the islands. Moreover, the essays address the experience of both Hispanic Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean groups in order to underwrite a Pan-Caribbean conceptual unity and to invite systematic comparisons of the diversities and commonalities found between and among peoples from the two major Caribbean historical, cultural regions.

The essay material is richly informative. The introductory section offers a general context for the specific case studies that follow. Chaney sketches the Caribbean background to the recent migrations. She notes that extensive outmigration in search of new economic frontiers is not a recent phenomenon but an institutionalized strategy, especially in the Afro-Caribbean region where outmigration has been a desired goal for over a century. Integral to this ideology is the expectation that migrants retain strong ties to their home countries, regarded as places they would prefer to live if economic conditions and/or the political situation were more favorable. A case in point are the Garifuna discussed by Gonzalez, a population of approximately 200,000 living along the central coastline of Belize, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. Some 10,000 have recently migrated to New York City and Gonzalez underscores the fact that their long history of temporary and recurrent migration has both helped maintain the Garifuna sociocultural system at home and "pre-adapted" Garifuna migrants to the experience of living among other peoples while retaining their own cultural identity. Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow report a similar positive orientation toward migration among Barbadians, adding that their outmigration not only helps sustain their home society but may serve also as a channel for repatriating change-inducing ideologies, in this case the Black Power ideology.

Reimers gives a brief synoptic history of New York City and its major migrant populations, describing the initial positioning of each group within the city's changing class/ethnic divisions and biracial social structure and how the immigrants have contributed to the growth of the city and its

<sup>10</sup> Studies by anthropologists of Caribbean life in New York City are part of a larger trend in today's practice of urban anthropology which teaches that "the field" (of study) is not elsewhere but everywhere.

institutions. He raises the question of where the new Third World immigrants fit into the city's race/class hierarchies and how they may alter it. Bryce-Laporte discusses related issues and the multiple linkages involved in recent Caribbean immigration to New York City. He notes the ethnic invisibility of Afro-Caribbeans, regarded by White Americans as Black, and the often ambivalent attitudes toward the new immigrants within the ranks of the two minority categories with whom they are identified. Stressing the point that "New York City must be seen as a major point of international convergence," Bryce-Laporte's examples support the contention that between the Caribbean and New York City a transnational sociocultural system has come into being.

Conway and Bigby conclude the introductory section with an examination of Caribbean residential patterns in New York City. They find that the English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans and the French-speaking Haitians live in relatively close residential proximity to each other but are residentially more separated from the Spanish-speaking Dominicans and Cubans than Black Americans are from Puerto Ricans. Thus cultural differences between Afro- and Hispanic Caribbeans are replicated sociospatially in New York City, while Black Americans and Puerto Ricans are sociospatially closer. Conway and Bigby's analysis underscores diversity and raises interesting questions about future patterns of intergroup association and separation.

The Afro-Caribbean case studies begin with a discussion by novelist Paule Marshall of an earlier group of West Indian immigrants—the Barbadian women who came to New York after World War I and whom she knew while growing up in Brooklyn. Employed as day-work domestics to "scrub floors" in White America, they came together after work to recreate a separate West Indian "yard life" as they sat around the kitchen table "hold[ing] onto the memories that define[d] them," and distinguished them from Black Americans. They saw Black Americans as lacking a racial pride and militance they possessed because "Be Jesus Christ, in this white man world you got to take your mouth and make a gun." Marshall is among the first to discuss the perceptions of immigrant women and to describe the style of discourse in which they dissected experiences and articulated a political consciousness (a style that has been recorded and analyzed for West Indian and Black American men but seldom for women). Marshall strikes two themes that are explored further in the following essays: the position of Afro-Caribbeans in relation to Black and White America, and the nature of the female half of the immigrant experience.

Barbadians are also discussed in Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow's essay on changing racial and political consciousness of West Indian migrants in New York City and London. Traveling different routes to a converging consciousness of being "Black People in a White world," both groups of Barbadians became receptive to the 1960s Black Power Movement's challenge to structures of inequality and to its assertions of pride in race and culture. The

authors examine the impact of this new racial/political consciousness in Barbados. They point to the transnational content of the newly acquired consciousness, attributing it to the bidirectional exchanges between Caribbean islands and the metropolises.

West Indians in New York and London are also compared in Foner's study of Jamaican migrants. Although relatively successful in both cities, their success is greater in New York than in London. Foner argues that a critical factor is the different racial contexts in the two societies. In the absence of a large native Black population, Jamaicans in London become a visible racial minority, compared unfavorably to a White majority. Moreover, in London they lack a Black constituency to support their entrepreneurial, professional, and political endeavors. Elsewhere, Foner (1985) compares the identities Jamaicans acquire in London and New York City. Again she finds that the existence of a large native Black American population in New York is advantageous to Jamaicans, cushioning the racial discrimination and prejudice encountered by Jamaicans in London, where they are defined in racial terms as Black Britons rather than in ethnic terms as West Indians. By the second generation they occupy a position in London's racial hierarchy similar to that of Black Americans in the U.S. (*see*, Arnold, 1984). Given the colonial dimension of Britain's relation to West Indians and the semicolonial nature of the U.S. relation to its Black American population, the New York/London comparisons support the view that the positioning of immigrants in their host society's racial/ethnic hierarchy is strongly influenced by existing power relations between host and home societies.

Soto's paper on West Indian child fostering and Garrison and Weiss's study of Dominican family networks both demonstrate the ways in which Caribbean kin structures and practices are being internationalized by migrants. Soto's focus on children as an integral part of Afro-Caribbean circular migration adds a new dimension to the study of migrant ties to their home societies. She shows how child fostering maintains links between dispersed female members of the international migrant community and thereby helps build women's wealth and power. Internationalized child fostering, the work of women, is an important component in sustaining a historical and cultural continuity between home and host societies. Its role in generating and regenerating the Caribbean transnational cultural system needs to be noted.

Internationalized child fostering has emerged as part of the new female-initiated migration found among women coming from the Afro-Caribbean region. These women are responding to U.S. labor market conditions and possess family forms which support the independent migration of women who have children. Soto compares Puerto Rican versions of internationalized child fostering to those she describes for West Indians. Given a different family structure and different gender roles, she questions whether the insti-

tution plays a similar role among Puerto Ricans. Hopefully, the question will stimulate the comparative research needed for an answer.

Garrison and Weiss describe the internationalizing of Dominican kin networks and the strategies that members of a patrifocal Dominican family adopt in order to become reunited in New York City. They point out that because the U.S. family reunification law is based on a too restricted concept of family, Dominicans are compelled to resort to illegal as well as legal means in order to reconstitute themselves as a corporate family group in New York. The family structure described in this case study differs not only from the U.S. definition of family but also, and in different ways, from Afro-Caribbean family forms. However, what is common to both Caribbean groups is the not inconsiderable movement of individuals trying to maintain "patterns of reciprocal family obligations [that] persist among kin dispersed between New York and" the island societies.

Pessar provides another perspective on Dominican family ideology and loyalties. She examines how the waged employment of Dominican women working in the garment industry improves their status in their culturally ascribed "domestic sphere." Although most of the women work at "dead end" jobs, the majority of those interviewed regard themselves as middle class rather than working class. Pessar imputes this to the power of Dominican family/household ideology. The women she interviewed tended to define themselves by the consumption power of their households rather than by their status in the work place. Hence, while there is a high rate of labor force participation among Dominican women, what counts for them is that their wages have increased their decision-making power in the allocation of household resources and contributed to the purchase of household prestige goods that have become markers of modernity and mobility. Thus because of women's strong identification with their households, the improvement in the status of the household is seen as an enhancement of women's status. While Pessar concludes by questioning whether this pattern will persist into the second generation, her study points to the need for comparative analysis of the female immigrant experience, currently a subject of considerable scholarly interest (*see*, for example, Basch and Lerner, 1986; Ewen, 1985; Morokvasic, 1984; Mortimer and Bryce-Laporte, 1981; Simon and Brettell, 1986).

The articles by Buchanan-Stafford on Haitians and by Flores, Attinasi, and Pedraza on Puerto Ricans take up the issue of language as a marker of identity. For both groups, conflicts over language encapsulate conflicts over the political, cultural, and/or class orientation immigrants assume. These conflicts have their origin in the home countries and become transposed and often magnified in New York. Among Haitians, the conflict is internal to the community, centering on whether Haitian Creole, language of the Haitian masses, or French, language of Haiti's past colonial and present elite, is to be privileged as the marker of Haitian identity. Among Puerto Ricans, the

language issue is not only an internal community issue, but also a city-wide contentious public issue. In Puerto Rico, the struggle waged to maintain Spanish as the national language in the face of U.S. hegemony caused language to become identified with Puerto Rico's political conflicts over its relation to the U.S. In New York, the Puerto Rican struggle for a bilingual approach to education in the city's public schools, where over a third of the children are of Hispanic origins, has also become identified as a status issue—in this case the status of the Puerto Rican migrant community.

Compared to other immigrant groups, Puerto Ricans are seen as actively resisting cultural and linguistic assimilation by refusing to abandon their distinctive ethnic markers. But in their study of the actual linguistic practices of Puerto Ricans living in working-class El Barrio in East Harlem, Flores, Attinasi, and Pedraza found a dynamic bilingual code switching between Puerto Rican Spanish and urban varieties of American English. This resulted in a speech form referred to as "Spanglish." As in the case of West Indian creoles and Black English, the code switching linguistic practices have expanded communicative skills. As Spanglish becomes incorporated into popular culture, it becomes "a new amalgam of human expression," and a resource for challenging politically dominant views and traditions.

Challenge to the imposition of dominant views and traditions is also an aspect of the growing participation in *Santería*. *Santería* is an Afro-Caribbean religion (derived from Yoruba beliefs and practices) which Cubans brought to New York. As Gregory states in his essay, it has drawn considerable numbers of Hispanics, Black Americans, and some West Indians, and has attracted many of the college-educated, second generation Caribbeans who have become interested in African culture. Gregory writes that joining *Santería* "houses" provides an "inter-ethnic sense of identity, grounded in both African culture and New World social history, [that] has emerged from the encounter of Caribbean peoples and Black Americans in New York City." *Santería* in New York is another example of the conscious effort of Caribbeans to reproduce aspects of their heritage that had been denigrated, and to resist the destruction of their distinctive cultural identities.

Ethnic organizing—regarded as identity-creating culturally reproducing, supportive, and politicizing among immigrants—is discussed in papers dealing with both Afro-Caribbeans and Hispanics. Sassen-Koob compares the incidence of different types of ethnic associations found in New York's Dominican and Colombian communities, noting that their differences cannot be explained in terms of a shared Hispanic culture. She proposes instead that the class status of immigrants and the disparity between their places of origin and destination better account for their modes of articulation, *i.e.*, more internally-oriented, expressive activities among Dominicans, more outwardly-oriented, instrumental organizations among Colombians. In a useful exchange, Georges amends this formulation. With data from her recent research on Dominicans, she questions the implicit linear view of the devel-

opment of ethnic organizing Sassen-Koob presents. Georges suggests that the nature of ethnic organizing can be better understood in terms of the specific "political-economic context of both sending and receiving societies at the moments under scrutiny." Sassen-Koob's response to Georges' comment further clarifies the issues involved in understanding forms of ethnic organizing. She ends by noting that "Georges' findings on the continuing importance of home country politics is an important variable underscoring the distinctiveness of today's immigrant mobilization." Both of these latter points are borne out in the two articles on the politics of ethnic organizing among Afro-Caribbeans. Basch describes how the political activities linking Grenadians and Vincentians to their home countries strengthen rather than detract from their mobilizing activities around political issues in New York. Moreover, homeland ties have heightened their sense of being ethnic groups with distinct political interests while remaining within the orbit of Black American politics. This conscious coming out as an ethnic group within Black America is a new phenomenon for West Indians. It is further analyzed by Kasinitz (1987), who sees it as evidence of the new cultural and political awareness of New York's Caribbean community. Basch's assertion that more active West Indian involvement in the political life of both their home and host societies has created "a single field of action comprised of a diverse yet unitary set of interests" is also well documented in the article by Schiller, *et al.* Charting the course of Haitian organizing activity in New York from 1957 to the present their historical overview calls attention to the multiple identities around which Haitians have organized. The authors further show how changes over time have been determined by changes in the political relations between the U.S. and Haiti. Their analysis leads to the view that Haitian identities and organizations are transnational in content and orientation.

The book concludes with a comparison of two annual Caribbean celebrations in the streets of New York City. Kasinitz and Freidenberg-Herbstein analyze the Puerto Rican parade and West Indian Carnival as two collective rituals. They compare how they are organized and staged, the images of Puerto Ricans and West Indians that are projected, the political messages conveyed, and the goals that are dramatized. For each case, it is shown how the ritual drama that is played out in the street represents an intermeshing of the culture and politics of both home and host societies.

While not all aspects of contemporary Caribbean sociocultural life are covered in this collection, the essays point to a similar transnational cultural and political dynamic underlying the changes and continuities examined. Hence, the case studies refer to a wider sociopolitical field than heretofore considered relevant in most immigrant studies. This indicates that the ways in which Caribbeans are reconstituting their lives in New York City represents something beyond new additions to New York's famed ethnic diversity. Their presence challenges older notions of immigrant assimilation and

acculturation and aspects of the ideology by which the U.S. has come to view itself as a nation of ex-immigrants.

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