

# CEPAL

## Review

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# C E P A L

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# Youth in the English-speaking Caribbean: the high cost of dependent development

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In the 1960s, the young people of the English-speaking Caribbean countries were witnesses to some of the most radical changes that were to take place in them, especially the transition from colonial status to independence, which was to bring about irreversible changes in the course of those nations and the lives of their inhabitants. Young people were told that they would not lose in the process. Indeed, Dr. Eric Williams—founding statesman of Trinidad and Tobago and one of the best-known leaders of that time—said that children held the future in their bookbags.

This article examines the effects of those changes on the young people of the English-speaking Caribbean in the 1980s. It begins by looking at some aspects of the social and cultural structure which turn around the notion of dependent development and form the backcloth for youth problems and, in that connection, examines some of the anthropological theories which serve as the conceptual framework for analysing those problems. It then goes on to see how such problems are expressed in the fields of employment, tourism, education, health, housing and the family, young women, and culture.

In the conclusions, emphasis is placed on the need to undertake a broad study of young people in each of the countries of the subregion in order to examine their difficulties and concrete needs. Such a study could bring out the frustration, discouragement and disorientation of young people and the urgent need to apply corrective measures and put into effect programmes aimed at solving those problems.

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For nearly all of the English-speaking Caribbean countries the 1960s represented not only an eclipse of the colonial era but also the challenge of building a nation. In light of this new challenge, various development strategies were explored and instituted, all with the goal of redirecting and/or charting new paths of social, economic and political development. The success of each strategy depended ultimately on the ability to abandon or minimize dependence on metropolitan countries, while increasing State autonomy and self-reliance. The crucial question for each of these new nation-States became that of gaining adequate power and control over their internal affairs in order to pursue and achieve clearly defined objectives for national development.

History has registered the constitutional decolonization and advancement towards autonomy and self-reliance in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua-Barbuda, Jamaica and Saint Christopher-Nevis have all achieved constitutional independence, with Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago subsequently moving towards the achievement of republican status. The other nation-States—Montserrat, the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the British Virgin Islands—remain colonies of Britain.

A recurrent question for all of these newly independent territories, however, centres on the reality and effectiveness of the process of decolonization. To what extent are autonomy, self-reliance and self-direction—the catch words of independence—merely constitutional, representing neither the political, economic, social and cultural self-control that the concept implies? The question becomes more relevant in assessing the state of youth in the contemporary Caribbean, for certainly the direction of a country's youth is a useful and accurate measure of the effectiveness of strategies of self-reliance, autonomy and independence.

It is within this framework that the plight of today's youth in the English-speaking Caribbean must be viewed, particularly with respect to issues such as national identity, cultural alienation and cultural imperialism, which this paper cites as some of the fundamental issues beneath the obvious challenges being experienced by Caribbean youth. For it is important in the decolonization and development process to focus not only on economic and political considerations, as most of the English-speaking Caribbean has done, but also on cultural considerations, since the most forceful domination of the Caribbean existed not only in the economic and political spheres, but in the cultural domain too. In fact, it is in the cultural sphere that opposition to ideological domination has traditionally surfaced, and continues to surface, in the culture of the Caribbean working class. This paper hypothesizes that despite constitutional decolonization, and despite the economic and political reforms accomplished in the post-colonial period, the Caribbean remains dogged by economic dependence on the metropolitan countries, and plagued with a deeply-rooted cultural and psychological colonization that forms the basis for the crisis of today's youth.

This approach —without in any way belittling the repercussions of economic forces on the development of young people—considers culture to be fundamental for their social and psychological development, especially in the transition from colonialism to independence and in the immediate post-colonial phase of nation building. Culture is perceived as a body of socially acquired values, meanings, beliefs and ideas that serve society as behavioural guides and models (Mintz and Price, 1976). It is through culture, as collective practice or practical activity, that a society interprets its experience, directs its actions and defines its very existence: a process through which the stability, cohesion and continuity of the entire group are ensured. For the Martiniquan psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, "a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take

its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on" (1963). Culture thus assumes the monumental task of forming and projecting an ideology that shapes national consciousness: a task which it was never assigned in the post-colonial English-speaking Caribbean.

For the purpose of this study, the United Nations chronological definition of youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 is used. However, because of the analytical framework employed, it is important to view this group not merely as a chronological category but also as a socioeconomic group within a historical and political context. In those nations which have attained independence, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are among the first generation to be raised in decolonized societies. They are, then, the products of the immediate post-colonial experience, representing the harvest of the first post-colonial ruling élites. As such, they mirror the failures and successes of that generation and become a significant variable in analysing the effectiveness of approaches and strategies for national development.

This study takes full cognizance of the role of women as preservers and transmitters of culture, since women—in their roles as mothers, nurturers, and often *de facto* heads of households—play a key role in the child-rearing function and in the socialization of young people. It is to women that the major task falls of ensuring the regeneration and continuance of the group, and youth inherits the responsibility of effecting this regeneration and continuance. Thus, women as transmitters, and youth as recipients of what Edward Brathwaite (1970) describes as one's *Nam*,<sup>1</sup> or submerged cultural reality and identity, assume an even more important role in ensuring the appropriateness and immortality of a cultural ideology that forms the basis for the survival and sustenance of the group.

<sup>1</sup>Now is a word/concept developed by Edward Brathwaite. *Nam* is man spelled backwards, i.e. man in disguise. It is the state of the African under the pressure of slavery: man generally under pressure/oppression, disguised/submerged in order to survive.

To summarize, this paper posits the importance of cultural decolonization in the process of nation building and hypothesizes that the fundamental disorientation and alienation of youth in the English-speaking Caribbean is rooted in the institutional flimsiness and superficial planning in the area of cultural development. In fact, the paper supports the view that the development process is itself a cultural process, the reinforcement of which must be viewed as a developmental imperative along with attention to population matters, health, education, agriculture, the transfer of technology, etc. (Nettleford, 1979), "for each

society relies first on its own strengths and resources and defines its personalized vision of the future" (Raymont, 1977). This essay further submits that women and youth, because of their importance in assuring the regeneration and stability of any society» have a leadership role to play in the area of culture and national development in post-colonial societies. It is a role which they have not been allowed to play, because both groups have historically been sidelined as mere understudies and supporting characters to those perceived as the main actors and guardians of the society —adult males.

## I

### Social and cultural framework

The Caribbean as a region can be viewed as a culture area, that is to say, a distinctive geographical region sharing a distinctive distribution of culture traits. While the cultural sphere has been regarded widely as having the most power over the lives of those enslaved and indentured in the Caribbean, it has received the least attention from Caribbean scholars, governments, policy-planners and decision-makers. Yet it is the cultural process—which is not exclusive of economic activities and modes of production—that was considered the most threatening during the period of enslavement and European colonial rule. In fact, the use of culture to "de-self" the enslaved became a key means of sustaining the image of European superiority and maintaining control in the post-Emancipation period (Hart, 1980).

The practice of carefully nurturing a sense of inferiority was as deep-rooted as it was pervasive. Neither religion, education, politics nor economic affairs, escaped its continuing vise. Nowhere are its dangerous, destabilizing effects more clearly visible than in today's Caribbean youth. It is for this reason that the plight of youth in the English-speaking Caribbean represents a damning commentary on the

effectiveness of post-colonial development strategies and the local ruling élites, for Caribbean youth lack the cultural ammunition necessary to battle with the hegemonic culture within their own societies and the persistent external threats of cultural imperialism. "To fight for national culture", says Fanon, "means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible" (1963). It is a fight that must be led and directed from an institutional level, and must be multi-disciplined in its breadth. It is in this area that post-colonial development strategies—in spite of successes and advances in some areas—have failed most noticeably. When examined closely, the area of culture remains a significant *locus* of internal and external domination and control.

The many theories on the English-speaking Caribbean reflect the historical complexity of the region. One of the oldest economic theories, the thesis of the plantation society (Best, 1968; Beckford, 1972), has equal relevance in anthropological analyses of these highly stratified societies. Based on the Latin American dependency theory, it identifies the plantation system as the core institution of the social order

of the pre-Emancipation Caribbean, stressing its pervasive influence —particularly with regard to intra/extra-territorial relationships— and the structural dependency which, the theory concludes, lingers in the midst of apparent change. Offshoots of this structural dependency are hierarchical class relations; unstable family organization; the low level of community organization; rigid patterns of stratification; a generally brittle social order; and an Eurocentric intelligentsia (Wagley, 1957).

The theory is one of disintegration and disorganization. According to Beckford's position, the only real change effected since Emancipation has been a minimal and individualized mobility for black people. Thus, inherent in the theory is the notion of structural continuity in change, which alludes to the inability of Caribbean societies to reach beneath mere cosmetic changes for a complete re-examination of existing social structures and to embrace the obligations and responsibilities of the post-colonial era to create new solutions to specific challenges rooted in the pre-independence history. While the plantation society theory has indeed been argued as outmoded (Craig, 1982), its concepts of a continued structural dependency and the plantation as the one rallying point of a fragile unit are particularly relevant and instructive for the approach this paper takes with regard to the cultural alienation and disorientation of youth.

Perhaps the most popular theory of Caribbean societies is the Plural Society thesis developed by M.G. Smith (1965), which stresses differentiation and separateness on a cultural, social and/or racial basis and the maintenance of parallel but not overlapping institutions. The theory uses a conflict model of society, with the use of force viewed as the only means of assuring cohesion and order. It characterizes a society comprised of diverse peoples with a lack of social will, who "mix but do not mingle". The theory has been severely criticized, especially on the grounds of its emphasis on the divisive elements of Caribbean society and its neglect of the more unifying elements. Still, it holds particular relevance for multi-ethnic societies like Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana and, to a lesser extent, Jamaica.

In using this theory to analyse various aspects of Caribbean societies, Lloyd Braithwaite (1970) argues that although these societies are culturally heterogeneous, they operate on a common scale of values inherited from the colonial rule. That common value, however, on which falls the task of integrating the society, is ethnic superiority and inferiority. Thus, it is the acceptance of the social superiority of "whiteness" and things European (values reinforced by a local Eurocentric élite) that legitimizes the system of inequality. And Braithwaite points out, "the hostility to anything of African origin is so strong that it is difficult for anything that is recognized as African to persist". Despite its many failings, the theory throws some light on the continuing negation and devaluation of African cultural traditions in the English-speaking Caribbean, in spite of the region's overwhelming majority of people of African descent. The negative impact of this continued derogation of a significant element in the Caribbean culture complex on the cultural confidence of Caribbean youth is a major concern of this study.

Both of these models have been updated by the theory of "cultural dualism" which has its intellectual roots in the work of Melville Herskovits (1941) on the interplay of African and European elements in West Indian culture, itself rooted in E.B. DuBois' "double consciousness" analysis of Black American society. It is a simultaneous carrying of two traditions, one African, the other European, which Herskovits described as "socialized ambivalence" and which Roy S. Bryce-LaPorte (1970) identified as a form of "biculturalism" in religious beliefs and practices. What emerges is the competing and contrasting relationship between African-derived cultural conditioning and symbolisms and the European colonial tradition, which results in a duality of cultural orientations as exemplified in language (creóle and standard English), social codes, behaviour, attitudes and religion. The duality is manifested in attempts to weave these two contradictory cultural strands into an integrated whole: an inherently confusing process, aggravated by the moral and cultural inferiority assigned to everything African, which remains a legacy from the period of colonialism.

In a work aptly titled "Crab Antics" (1973), Peter Wilson uses a model of cultural dualism to analyse English-speaking Providencia, a tiny island in the southwest Caribbean, where patterns of social interaction are paralleled to the desperate struggling of crabs in a barrel, each pulling the other down in frantic efforts to step on each other to get to and remain on the top. Wilson embodies the egalitarian/hierarchical contradiction in two conflicting values: "respectability", rooted in the old colonial order and "English culture", with a drive towards stratification and inequality, and "reputation", grounded in an intrinsic moral self-worth, with a drive toward equality. "Reputation" amounts to an indigenous response to "respectability", which is perceived as a representation of the imposed alien structure of domination. "Reputation" stresses "the equality of human inequalities, whereas respectability seeks to rank them". Wilson sees "crab antics" as the persistent dialectical relationship between these two antithetical value systems, and proposes the model as having analytical applicability for all English-speaking Caribbean societies.

There are other studies which deal with this duality of values in Caribbean society (Makiesky-Barrow, 1976; Diane Austin, 1983). Austin incorporates both themes of ideological domination and cultural opposition within a single analytical perspective, viewing both conflicting ideas as one continuous process, which she claims reflects a situation of "conflict contained by domination" wherein the stability of the English-speaking Caribbean lies. This analysis advances the view of local "creóle" élites as continuing to perpetuate an ideology that promotes not value integration and equality, but domination and stratification. For historical sociologist Gordon Lewis (1968) political and ideological structures of the colonial period are simply carried over into the post-colonial society:

"Social bullying and economic intimidation are pretty much the order of the day in the life of the masses... Nor does the political fact of independence...necessarily change the social system. It merely transfers its control from the metropolitan masters to the local ruling groups. And because these groups

understand the majority better than did the expatriate officials they might be able, indeed, to tighten up the psychological screws that hold the majority in their prison."

It is in the hands of these cultural, economic and political brokers that the future of Caribbean youth has been entrusted, and it is on their shoulders that the responsibility for the ideological conflict and disenchantment of Caribbean youth must weigh.

All of these theories point to race, class, culture and ideology as inescapable dimensions of Caribbean social reality. Given the foregoing reference to the importance of the cultural process in the national development and reconstruction of post-colonial societies, it is important to view development strategies, particularly with respect to young people, within these contrasting principles of social organization and culture, for it is this irreconcilable duality that underlies the fundamental problems of cultural alienation, disorientation and displacement that form the backdrop for the myriad challenges of youth in the English-speaking Caribbean. The problems of Caribbean young people hinge on a cultural dependence that is in turn linked to the continuing economic dependence, dictated by the terms of international trade and the penetration of foreign capital.

Perhaps the most vexing aspect of this theory of cultural dualism is not the blending of these two opposing cultural streams—one European, the other African—but the continued (conscious and subconscious) perception of the inherent superiority of European cultural elements and the worthlessness and inferiority of African cultural traditions. The perceived superiority of the former has now been extended to include North American cultural influences, the United States having assumed increased visibility and control over the English-speaking Caribbean. In essence, the result is a total confidence in and thirst for external and foreign ideas and attitudes, and an accompanying derogation and devaluation of everything internal and indigenous. Continued ignorance of Africa and its rich history and culture translates into the persistent denial and degradation of the

African element of the Caribbean culture and a dangerous readiness to accept any and every foreign loophole by way of escaping the truth and reality of a national self-identity, for a true national self-identity rests inescapably on recognition of and reconciliation with the African component of the indigenous culture.

The emergence of a "creole" culture in these Caribbean nation-States does not completely address the problem. While creolization admits, encourages and acknowledges the blending of the two cultural streams, it tacitly embraces a European bias that still positions African cultural traditions as minority influences within the total culture complex. In its inherent glorification of European concepts, creole culture —albeit subtly— at worst negated, and at best minimized the contributions of both African and Indian culture. In countries such as Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana which have large East Indian populations, East Indian culture has merged with the African-derived culture: a natural progression, since both groups, as enslaved and indentured "foreigners", represented the dispossessed and oppressed, and have to a large extent remained at the base of a pyramidal structure that placed Europeans and European-looking people at the top and the "high coloureds" in the middle —a space they now share with post-colonial occupational élites of African, Indian and mixed descent.

East Indians, however, have been able to negotiate a completely different relationship with their new environment. Because of the different conditions under which they were brought to the Caribbean, they were able to exercise a "cultural persistence" which fuelled the cultural confidence to protect them from the psychological trauma and rootlessness of a desecrated and fragmented culture. In his study of East Indians in Trinidad, Klass (1961) documents the ability of villagers to reconstitute social institutions which functioned as mechanisms for the transmission of their culture

and the maintenance of community cohesiveness. Africans, on the contrary, had little alternative but to adapt their culture to the new environment through a syncretic process, and it is this hybrid culture that still thrives in the English-speaking Caribbean, despite the attempts of the metropolitan ruling powers (with the active participation of local "creole" élites) to exorcise it. While contemporary post-colonial élites have not succeeded in ignoring this syncretic culture that is grounded in African retentions and reinterpretations, they have continued to vest cultural differences with an economic, social and political significance that condemns practitioners of Africanized/folk culture to low socioeconomic status.

It is impossible, then, to examine the situation of youth in the English-speaking Caribbean without looking at the influence of this cultural process on the development strategies that emerged in the post-colonial experience, the continued cultural and psychological insecurity and economic dependence which give birth to these strategies, and the "crab antics" which they encourage. The dismantling of colonial rule raised urgent demands not merely for national reconstruction but also for creative national reconstruction... that is to say, an analysis of the situation in terms of the needs and priorities of the indigenous population. It called for thorough self-analysis in order to address the challenge of national building. It also called for a complete overhauling of systems which were designed by the colonial powers for their enrichment and glorification. The recognition and acceptance of this task of creative reconstruction can come only with the confrontation, recognition, and acceptance of the collective selves that have been so carefully ensconced and subjugated under irrelevant foreign ideas which continue to generate the national confusion so clearly reflected in the current situation of Caribbean youth.

## II

## Socioeconomic aspects

Previous studies of youth in the Caribbean have pointed to the relation between the rapid expansion of the region's youth population and the growth of the global youth population. According to a recent United Nations analysis of population trends in the Caribbean, the population of the entire region grew at an annual average rate of 1.4% during the period 1980-1984: a figure that reflects a downward trend from the annual rate of 2.1% reported during the 1970s (United Nations, 1986). In actual numbers this means that between 1970 and 1983 the Caribbean population rose from about 25 to 30 million. Despite this slackening trend and its lower level than the corresponding world growth rate of 1.8% the population growth rate remains high. During the same period 1970-1973 the growth rate for the United States was 1.1% while for Western Europe it was only 0.4% (Nelson, 1986).

This declining trend, however, was not true for all of the Caribbean nation-States. Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Christopher-Nevis reflected it, but Belize and Guyana continued to show a significantly high growth rate of over 2.4%. The declining growth rate was mainly associated with effective birth control programmes in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. Even so, the Caribbean area remains one of the most densely populated in the world, and its youth population hovers around 20% of the entire population, except for Montserrat, where it amounts to only 5.5%.

The challenges of today's Caribbean youth far surpass the rate of its population expansion, and demand urgent attention and increased action from local, national and international organizations and agencies. Perhaps the most dramatic and telling indicator of the plight of youth in the Caribbean is the increasing number of young vagrants on the streets of the Caribbean, a situation which has reached panic proportions in Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana. In

Trinidad,<sup>2</sup> an alarming majority of these young vagrants are of African descent: a fact which again raises questions and concerns about the effects of race on post-colonial youth and demands in-depth study if its negative impact is to be understood and erased. Vanquished by negative prospects for the future and governments which seem to view young people as part of the problem rather than part of the solution, these young displaced persons take to the streets, daring society to see in their hopelessness the reflection of unsuccessful development policies.

Reference has already been made in this article to the problem of the precarious nature in real terms of the Caribbean countries' independence, analysed especially at the cultural level.

Persistent economic dependence is easier to measure. Beckford (1972) elaborated on the all-pervasiveness of the plantation system and its ability to generate and sustain a persistent underdevelopment that has continued in the post-Independence era: foreign trade and aid; imported consumption and production patterns; tourism; gross inequities in the distribution of income and wealth; expatriate ownership and control of business enterprises; foreign owned and controlled banking and financial systems; repatriation of profits...all in a mad rush towards modernization and development, without much thought on the net loss to the population and to youth in particular. In spite of the alleged success of such economic programmes in the Caribbean, the overall results are high rates of unemployment and underemployment; severe

<sup>2</sup>Tobago, which has remained a more rural environment than its urbanized sister island, Trinidad, is remarkably free of vagrants. In fact, the island's only vagrant is reputed to have come from Trinidad. Redfield's ideal type dichotomy of folk and urban societies—the most rural being the most folk, and the most urban being more prone to "disorganization", secularization and individualization—applies here.

underutilization of the labour force; heightened frustration; increased social and economic marginalization of youth, and cultural alienation.

Faced with this situation, and despite restrictive measures adopted by the United States, Canada and England to stem the human flow from the Caribbean, an increasing number of young people opt for the one proven escape hatch: emigration. In so doing, they aggravate the brain drain to which the Caribbean has been subjected historically. The salient point is that policies and programmes of Caribbean governments still represent the practice of a development closely linked to and consequently directed by its relationship with the metropolis. It is this fundamental truth that underlies the continued disorganization of Caribbean societies. It is the effects of this process, which dependency theorists term "dependent development", that are so clearly discernible in this first post-colonial generation.

### 1. *Unemployment and under-employment*

Among the causes of unemployment and underemployment, so widely documented by economists and other experts, which are worth mentioning in view of their drastic effect on today's growing population are: rapidly expanding population; high growth rate of the labour force; the increasing rate of female participation in the labour force; the drift of the population from rural to urban areas, resulting in a conversion of rural underemployment to urban unemployment; the importation of labour-saving, modern technology from developed countries, particularly in manufacturing activities; the concentration on introduction of capital-intensive technology, instead of labour-saving technology. Trinidad and Tobago during its 1973-1983 period of oil wealth presents an instructive case study; the unbalanced mix of education and training, often producing inappropriate mixtures and levels of skills contrary to those needed in the labour market (Demas, 1977).

Another factor of particular relevance for the English-speaking Caribbean is the

perception of the superiority and higher status of the "collar and tie" job, a direct hold-over from the period of colonial rule. Policies and programmes that emphasize industrialization and modernization, to the detriment of agriculture have simply validated and reinforced this perception, while condemning the population to near-starvation and high-priced imported food and at the same time promoting consumption patterns that encourage tastes for imported foods and devalorize indigenous foods and tastes.

The problem of unemployment and underemployment, a major concern and priority of most developing countries, represents a traumatic and frustrating experience for adults but it is an even more shattering and devastating reality for young people entering the job market, because while for adults unemployment means unequal access to participating in the production, income and wealth of the society—a psychologically and emotionally damaging experience in itself—for youth it is a shocking introduction to the real world that could irrevocably tinge their relationship to their environment and their community and negatively direct the course of young impressionable lives. Lowered self-esteem, diminished self-worth, anger, anxiety, confusion, frustration, lack of direction, purposelessness and disenchantment summarize the experience of Caribbean youth on their first introduction to the job market.

The problem is severe. Data for Trinidad and Tobago—the Caribbean nation which enjoys the highest standard of living—show an overall unemployment rate of 15% in 1985. Unemployment for the 15 to 19 age group stands at 37% of the total work force, while the unemployment rate for the 20 to 24 age group is 25%. The 25 to 34 age group, however, shows a rate of 13%: a figure more in line with the overall rate. For all age groups the unemployment rate for females is considerably higher than that for males. This is particularly so in the 15 to 19 age group, where male unemployment is 35% and female unemployment 43%: a figure almost treble the overall female unemployment rate of 17%. These figures all represent an increase over the 1984 unemployment rates (table 1).

Table 1

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO:  
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES  
BY AGE AND SEX,  
1984-1985**

Age group	Date	Both sexes (%)	Male	Female
All ages	30/6/84	13	12	15
	31/12/84	14	12	17
	30/6/85	15	15	17
15-19	30/6/84	31	29	37
	31/12/84	35	32	42
	30/6/85	37	35	43
20-24	30/6/84	21	19	23
	31/12/84	22	21	23
	30/6/85	25	25	24
25-34	30/6/84	11	11	11
	31/12/84	12	11	14
	30/6/85	13	12	14

*Source:* Central Statistical Office, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, *Vital Statistics Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1986.

Although it was not possible to obtain current data for all the other Caribbean nations, table 2 details the unemployment rates by age group for the period 1980 to 1982 for some countries. In every country listed, the unemployment rate in the 15 to 19 age group was considerably higher than the rate in the 20 to 24 age group, and in Barbados, Belize, Montserrat and Saint Christopher-Nevis it was almost three times as high as the already high rate for that group.

The high unemployment rate among the 15 to 24 age group is connected with a regional educational system that subordinates vocational and technical skills to academic curricula, and hence provides little education and training for non "collar and tie" jobs. But to fully understand the enormous psychological impact of unemployment and underemployment in the Caribbean, it is important to view occupation as

Table 2

**SELECTED CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES:  
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES  
BY AGE GROUPS, 1980-1982**

Country	Unemployment rate	
	15-19 yrs.	20-24 yrs.
Barbados	40.9	14.7
Belize	13.9	5.2
British Virgin Islands	16.8	7.7
Dominica	55.7	23.8
Grenada	55.8	26.4
Guyana	55.5	22.7
Montserrat	32.7	11.5
Saint Christopher/Nevis	36.9	14.8
Saint Lucia	52.5	21.8
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	58.2	24.2
Turks and Caicos Islands	28.2	20.2

*Source:* *Vital Statistics Bulletin*, *op. cit.*

the major status symbol that it represents in the region, and a sphere in which the competition of the opposing ideologies, group solidarity and the drive for status is best observed. Placed within a historical-cultural context, employment in the English-speaking Caribbean becomes much more than a means for taking care of basic individual and family needs. It is not only a major channel for improving one's standard of living but also, like education, is perceived as a key factor in throwing off the residues of enslavement and indentureship and ridding oneself of the inferiority and low social status that has been historically synonymous with racial identity and economic dependence.

In his study, "Social Stratification in Trinidad", Lloyd Braithwaite (1975) documents the "fundamental change in the self-assertion of the lower classes" provided by employment opportunities during the establishment of American bases in Trinidad. According to Braithwaite, it is difficult to exaggerate the degree of personal dignity which came to the working class as a result of full employment. Thus, employment is perceived as a major element in social mobility, and a principal status

marker. Within the context of Wilson's "crab antics" model outlined in an earlier section, employment assumes a significant role in the long climb upwards. Emphasis on individual needs over community good has remained as a structural continuity from the pre-Independence period, and it is in attitudes towards work that this is clearly discernible. Particularistic ties of kinship, friendship, "contact" and political patronage have served to reinforce colonial values of individualism and "oneupmanship", and have served to vivify social and economic stratification at the expense of the harmony and progress of egalitarian societies. Occupation is viewed, not as an opportunity to make a valuable contribution to society, but as a means of reaping the social rewards and high status that accompany the acquisition of material goods that testify to material success. In other words, the concept of nation-building as a motive for occupational participation remains noticeably absent.

The rapid growth of State and local intervention in the economy, and the nationalization of formerly exclusive holdings of the metropolis are two of the bolder attempts of Caribbean countries to control their economies. Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica have made some headway in this attempt at economic decolonization. Still, there are fundamental attitudinal changes towards this new ownership which have not been effected, and they continue to haunt the self-realization of young people and thwart their level of participation in society.

It is in this vicious cycle that Caribbean youth have been trapped. Those who are uneducated and/or improperly trained for the job market are invariably those who possess neither the social skills nor economic and political power to elicit favours and patronage from the society's power brokers. Educated youth, on the other hand—particularly youth who have graduated from foreign universities—are perceived as threats by the more mature professionals who very often hold years of first-hand experience, but no university training. These young people suffer the brunt of the resentment of the older folks who, caught up in their own frustrations and insecurities, see young professionals as wanting too much, and "having things too easy". These young people become the unwilling

victims of the "crab antics" jockeying, and often become unsuspecting targets of vicious competition, pettiness and rivalry. Instead of freely allowing young people the benefit of their knowledge and experience, and encouraging their contribution and participation, many of these adult professionals prefer to block the progress of youth, thus adding to the latter's disenchantment and frustration with society. Competition for work, graft, "contacts", favours and patronage assume greater prominence in the quest for employment than qualifications, capability, and the desire and ability to contribute. The link between race, class, colour, and gender and access to economic power further complicates this scenario, leaving open invitations to black low-income youth to embark on a life of crime, and exposing young women—particularly single mothers—to sexual exploitation. Research of the 28 companies trading on the Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange point to a system of interlocking directorates as a mechanism for the concentration of wealth, power and privileges, together with a monopoly of information by a few (Parris, 1984). The research also found the corporate élite in Trinidad and Tobago, though multi-ethnic, to be dominated by those of Caucasian extraction. There is no reference to female representation among the group. In addition, the symbolism of the "collar and tie" job as representing social and economic superiority continues to limit the desires of youth to explore employment opportunities and pursue academic and professional interests in non "collar and tie" areas. This negative perception of non "collar and tie" work most severely affects the economy and the employment prospects of youth in agriculture, where the number of workers as a percentage of the total labour force is very low: 14.5% in Barbados, 17.1% in Jamaica, and 14.8% in Trinidad and Tobago in 1985. This low level of agricultural participation continues to exist in these Caribbean countries where unemployment rates for young people between the ages of 20 and 24 remain alarmingly high.

As economic forecasts for the Caribbean become more discouraging, population seem to have become even more creative than their governments in seeking solutions for economic

problems. There exists an underground economy or "parallel market" system, to which primarily women and young people have resorted in order to stave off poverty and starvation. Petty trade, mainly in foodstuffs, clothing, and motor car parts, has become a prime source of income for both of these groups. This trading has even become internationalized, as Guyanese exchange gold and diamonds for valuable market commodities from Trinidad and Tobago; Trinidadians purchase clothing from Curacao, Panama and Miami, and Jamaicans, restricted by foreign currency regulations, exchange rum, liqueurs and cigars for items of high value on the Jamaican market. One has only to walk down the main streets of Port of Spain to see the number of youths hawking clothing, shoes, cassettes and other imported goods on the sidewalks, to grasp the importance of this phenomenon to the survival of the unemployed.

## 2. *The effects of tourism*

Tourist arrivals in the Caribbean amounted to some six million people in 1982. Excluding Cuba, gross tourism receipts were estimated at about US\$ 3.6 billion (Blommestein, 1985). Regional tourism responded strongly to the upturn in the economy in 1984, and all destinations except Grenada received increases in visitor arrivals (ECLAC, 1985). Given the concentration on export promotion to offset foreign exchange shortages, further emphasis on tourism can be expected. The Nassau Understanding with respect to tourism recommends that the region "pursue vigorously the preservation and maintenance of existing tourist attractions and the development and diversification of new tourist attractions so as to increase the attractiveness of Caribbean holidays and hence to induce increased visitor traffic and/or length of stay and/or tourism expenditures" (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 1984). Even Trinidad and Tobago, which because of its oil and natural gas resources has traditionally maintained a policy of cautious distance from tourism, has now embarked upon a tourism thrust.

The economic benefits that can be derived from tourism are significant. In 1985 Barbados,

with a total of 304 000 arrivals, received US\$ 207 million; the Bahamas, US\$ 669 million from 1 121 000 tourists; Antigua, US\$ 50 million from 87 000 visitors; Jamaica, US\$ 388 million from 408 000 arrivals; while Trinidad and Tobago's 200 000 tourist arrivals represented a contribution of US\$ 163 million to the economy (*Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics*, 1985 Supplement). The potential for a negative social impact of large tourist inflows on these Caribbean countries with small populations must not be overshadowed by the attractiveness of tourism-generated foreign exchange earnings, however. With a population of only 120 000 Saint Lucia hosted 70 000 tourists in 1985, and although its tourism income amounted to US\$ 30 million, the impact of a tourist population that amounts to more than 50% of the population in one year is cause for concern. Since women and youth represent the largest segment of the unemployed labour force, it is they who remain a captive source for tourism-related employment and they are the groups most likely to be affected by the negative elements that often accompany tourism. Drug trafficking and drug abuse, organized crime, male and female prostitution and its accompanying sexually-related diseases are some of the more visible negative effects of tourism among young people in the Bahamas and Barbados. More subtle but perhaps more lasting and psychologically damaging is the role of tourism in aggravating the process of cultural alienation among Caribbean youth.

Economists, sociologists and anthropologists have long weighed the socioeconomic benefits against the socio-cultural impact of tourism. The latter two groups of specialists have been more concerned with the view of tourism as something that underscores the social and cultural differences between tourists and hosts, than its effect on the creation of new employment opportunities and the tendency of a thriving tourist industry to stem migration trends, particularly among the unemployed and underemployed women and youth in economically marginal areas. Despite these gains, its opponents argue, tourism fosters dependency rather than development, replicating forms of domination and structural underdevelopment that amount to neo-

colonialism, since the tourist industry depends heavily on foreign capital (Cohen, 1984). In addition, in societies like the Caribbean which have recent histories of enslavement and colonial rule, where the local populations are of predominantly African origin, and where the tourist population is likely to be North American and European, tourism runs the risk of recreating and reinforcing impressions of black servitude and white superiority and generating or aggravating disharmonious relations.

In spite of these disadvantages, tourism represents a ready market for cultural products. It could inspire the growth and development of an indigenous culture, while creating stimulation and a source of pride for young people, by promoting the production of cultural items which continue to suffer tremendous neglect and cooptation by the middle class in the post-independence period. This, however, in no way 'relieves Caribbean governments of the obligation of formulating cultural policies and establishing relevant cultural institutions that will serve as ideological groundings for young impressionable minds, on whom will fall the responsibility of continuing the challenge of national development. In fact, a reliance of economic development on tourism increases the urgency of this task, since because of its innate function of culture carrying, tourism exposes young people to different cultures in a process that could further aggravate cultural disorientation and alienation. In fact, it is only such government action that could offset the danger of diluting, commoditizing and exploiting local culture for the benefit of tourists, and the commercialization of authentic arts, rituals and customs—usually the domain of the lower economic groups—by local élites, who are normally in the forefront of tourist ventures.

### 3. Education

Independence in the English-speaking Caribbean ushered in an era that re-emphasized the importance of education, an importance held back during the colonial period, when education was synonymous with the middle and upper socioeconomic classes. The colonial perception

that educated locals might not be in their best interests placed education out of the reach of the masses. In addition, the dearth of educational institutions and the relatively high cost impeded mass access to education. Increased primary education and free secondary education thus became a national priority for these post-colonial societies. Impressively low illiteracy rates reflect the emphasis on education in the English-speaking Caribbean. Around 1982, the lowest illiteracy rate in the subregion was 0.7% in Barbados, while the highest illiteracy rates were 18.3% for Saint Lucia, and 11.3% for Antigua and Barbuda. Even lower illiteracy rates are registered for young people between the ages of 15 to 24. However, such low rates may not necessarily reflect the increasing production of functional illiterates, or the existence of educational curricula that are not effectively synchronized with the realities of Caribbean development.

According to the 1980 Population and Housing Census for Trinidad and Tobago, "the proportion of non-achievers, i.e., persons without an examination certificate, is 52.4%" of the country's adult population. The figure represents a disturbing 392 033 persons aged 20 and over who left school without visible proof of ever having attended. In addition, the data show that 34 251 persons 15 years of age and over have less than a primary level of education, or no education at all. While that figure is a considerable improvement over the figure of 54 126 twenty years earlier, it still does not augur well for an independent nation that was told its children held its future in their bookbags.

Education, like occupation, has historically been viewed as a means for achieving social mobility. In fact, it is viewed as the key means of occupational mobility, primarily through the civil service. Consequently, the process of acquiring a good education envelops students from a very young age in fierce competition and rivalry. It not only applies extreme pressure to compete early in their lives, but provides early socialization into the "crab antics" dynamics and, according to Austin (1983), institutional endorsement that inequality is due to differential ability and intelligence endowment. Although free secondary education for these societies was instituted on the attainment of Independence,

the competition to gain admittance to the élite secondary schools remained. Failure to gain entrance to the élite or quality secondary schools meant placement in a "Comprehensive School", structured to provide a mix of academic and technical training. But associated with these schools is a stigma of social and intellectual inferiority which students carry into their working lives. Youth also have access to Polytechnic Institutes or specialized schools for secretarial skills, hotel management, etc. Still, higher academic training remains the ideal. The regional network of higher education in the form of the University of the West Indies has permitted access to higher education within the region. However, the perception of the automatic inferiority of any regional institution resulted in a tendency to place a higher value on qualifications obtained from foreign (particularly British) universities. Later, expansion of the University's curriculum, introduction of new diploma and degree programmes, and the establishment of two new campuses stimulated heightened confidence and increased enrolment.

The University's three campuses are based at Mona, Jamaica (established in 1948); St. Augustine, Trinidad (established in 1960); and the 1963 Cave Hill, Barbados campus. Individual campus registration figures for 1981-1982 put student enrolment at 4 892; 3 124 and 1 566 respectively. The territories without a campus are: Antigua, Bahamas, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, Anguilla, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent. Guyana, once a fully participating territory, has since established its own professional faculties. One programme in Hotel Management is conducted in the Bahamas, but the Bahamas is not considered a campus territory (CRESALC/UNESCO:1985). While the total number of male registrants has traditionally been higher than female entrants, the gap has been narrowing. The 1984 student enrolment figures indicate a trend of significantly higher representation of women, particularly in the faculties of Arts and General Studies and Law.

Ironically, the concept of free secondary education has given birth to two extreme attitudes. One group has taken full advantage of

the benefits, skillfully utilizing their education for individual, social, occupational and economic upward mobility. The other group views education as a "freeness", and this notion seems to mature into an excessive reliance and expectation of hand-outs. It is this mentality that provides the catalyst for corruption, bribery and political patronage. Neither group appears to be able to see the connection between free education and the quest for national freedom, equality and development for which the system was designed. There are very few people in the middle realm between these two extremes who view education as the basis for the self-transformation and societal change necessary for creative reconstruction. In fact, highly represented in this middle realm are "returning nationals" with foreign education and experience and an eagerness to "make a contribution". These are quickly frustrated and disillusioned on entering or attempting to enter the workplace: the arena in which positive development policies and programmes should be consolidated and activated, but which instead remains a hotbed of competition, rivalry, intimidation and petty jealousy, more a testimony to "crab antics" than to social co-operation as a basis for national success and achievement. A significantly high percentage of these returning nationals are forced to return to "the cold".

The role of education, not only as it affects employment but as a pivotal force in the psychological transformation of newly independent countries, cannot be overestimated. Its function of instilling in young minds more relevant ideas, values and attitudes as prerequisites for new societies is an imperative for Caribbean governments. It is through the education process that young people can be socialized into more egalitarian societies, provided there exists the economic, political and cultural will to do so. The bridge between education and employment is a crucial one for Caribbean youth. It is in this transitional phase that the direction of young people—and by extension their societies—is determined. It is this period that provides the most serious choices for Caribbean youth as they battle with the frustrations of unemployment, feelings of uselessness, lack of self-confidence, diminished

self-worth and lack of self-esteem. The current restructuring of the University of the West Indies to emphasize territorial rather than regional input, the creation of Trinidad and Tobago's National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST), and the proliferation of extramural and adult education programmes point to attempts to seriously address continuing educational challenges. Still, the third-level sector shows a dramatic decrease in enrolment: a situation which demands urgent attention, as it relates directly to the employability of youth. In addition, there remains a need to become more creative in the use of the educational process to help in the task of societal transformation and to undo some of the deep-rooted damage effected via education during the colonial period.

#### 4. *Health*

Drug and alcohol addiction represent the most serious health problem of Caribbean youth. The most striking change during the 1980s has been the explosive increase of cocaine use in the Caribbean, especially in the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica. This increase has reached epidemic proportions in the past three years, particularly in the first two countries (CARICOM Secretariat, 1985). Perhaps the problem of youth and drug addiction can be more accurately viewed within an older context: that of the high incidence of alcoholism among the adult population. Alcohol is still the largest drug problem of the region, causing a heavy drain on the economies of these countries. In Trinidad and Tobago, where the oil wealth of the 1970s precipitated a national "spree", it has been estimated that health costs due to alcohol are TT\$ 80 million, and the cost in terms of lost productivity about TT\$ 100 million (Beaubrun, 1984).

According to the drug rehabilitation counsellors in Trinidad and Tobago, research has revealed that nearly 100% of those treated started with alcohol and graduated to harder drugs, depending on availability and cost. Experts in the field have also been able to further distinguish patterns of drug abuse among youth and adults, pointing to alcoholics as older and

employed, with increased cocaine dabbling and some cases of serious users among upper income groups. Drug addiction for youth, too, has a class differentiation, positioning middle and upper-middle-income youth as users of cocaine and LSD, and lower-income youth largely as pushers of cocaine and LSD, but users of marijuana. In Trinidad and Tobago, a further ethnic distinction is emerging, indicating a preference for alcohol among East Indians, while other ethnic groups suffer addiction to harder drugs. The salient point, however, is that an overwhelming majority of youth involved in drugs, whether as pushers or users, are unemployed.

Analysis of data obtained from a volunteer, non-residential drug counselling centre, based on information obtained from 84 patients during the period November 1985 to April 1986, paints a demographic portrait of the typical drug addict as between 14 and 44 years old; single (58.3%); unemployed (45.2%); male (90.5%), and predominantly of African descent (53.6%). East Indians represented 16.7% of the counselling centre's population, while 27.3% were of mixed ancestry. Only 9.5% of the population being treated were women. Of those seeking counselling, 82.1% were addicted to cocaine, but may have begun with milder drugs; 8.3% were addicted to marijuana, and 4.8% to alcohol. The youngest ages given for the introduction to drug use were age 8 for alcohol, age 9 for marijuana, and age 12 for cocaine. Of those receiving counselling, 95.2% claimed the problem was their own, while 10.7% admitted it was a family problem. Only four students (4.8%) were among the group; 27.3% in it were skilled and employed, and 19% unskilled but employed.

The link between education, unemployment and drug addiction is direct and inescapable. Young people either take full advantage of educational opportunities, cope successfully with the battery of examinations and go on to attend university, or they become overwhelmed by the process and drop out of the system very early. Given the high unemployment rates, however, for both groups the end of the line is a void that often becomes the beginning of flirtation with drugs and continues into serious addiction. In 1985 a nation-wide survey of drug use was carried out by Dr. Lennox Bernard of the

University of the West Indies. The sample comprised over three thousand students up to the age of 20 years, young people in youth camps and reform schools, and unemployed youths aged 14-20. Preliminary findings indicated that 16 was the decisive age at which drugs, including alcohol, were most frequently used. Among the reasons reported for drug use were: peer pressure; curiosity; search for happiness; need to stay calm; pressure at home; loneliness; school work; and performance at sport. There was also the startling revelation that drug abuse was highest among adolescents from stable homes with two-parent families.

The gravity of drug abuse in the Caribbean is cause for alarm, not only because of its destructive influence on youth, but because of its potential for destroying the entire society through its real threat of producing a whole generation of aimless, wasted and unproductive young people. The scourge affects more men than women, but the threat of prostitution, venereal disease, and pregnancies leading to drug-addicted babies presents even more dangerous complications for young women. The convenient location of the English-speaking Caribbean between the United States and South America makes it an easy transshipment point for drug trafficking. Its topography, the comparatively lax penalties for drug offences, the low price of cocaine, the purity of available high-quality cocaine from Colombia, the high prevalence of "freebasing", the availability of the more potent cocaine preprocessed as "rocks", and the new coca paste which is even more potent than freebased cocaine are some of the other explanations given for the rapid increase in drug abuse in the Caribbean.

Informal case histories for Trinidad and Tobago document: 1) the consumption of alcohol by future drug addicts from as early as eight years old; 2) the startling number of teenage drug addicts who were introduced to drugs by their parents; 3) the availability of "soft" and "hard" drugs from pushers in schools; 4) the connection between the adoption of North American habits and behaviour and drug abuse; 5) for the Bahamas, Bermuda and Barbados, the link between increased drug addiction and the influx of North American tourism, prostitution, gambling and organized

crime; and 6) the spread of drug abuse by locals returning from extended sojourns in the United States and England.

In a more general sense, health problems affecting Caribbean youth are in keeping with some of the major problems in health care generally: environmental pollution, impure water supplies, unsanitary facilities, lack of health care servicing of rural areas, and inadequate health services and antiquated health equipment, resulting in a lack of confidence in health care. For young women, teenage pregnancies present a continuing challenge which will be more closely examined later. The most recent health concern for the Entire Caribbean is the dreaded Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), particularly in those countries which have large homosexual populations or which, because of tourism, attract among their tourists a large number of homosexuals. The fear of the disease in Trinidad and Tobago has stimulated a new trend towards sexual caution among youth, which will hopefully trigger a decline in the number of teenage pregnancies.

### 5. *Housing*

The nub of the housing problem for young people is tied to problems of inadequate education, unemployment, difficulties in communicating with parents, rural-urban migration in search of employment, and drug addiction. According to one social worker in Trinidad and Tobago, "some children simply should not be living with their parents". In fact, the lack of quarter-way and half-way housing for young addicts in drug rehabilitation and counselling programmes presents a vicious return cycle to the same environment and problems which encouraged drug addiction in the first place. Some young people end up on the streets, as reflected in the alarming increase in the number of young vagrants.

Two other economically-related factors have also contributed to the housing difficulties of young people. For Trinidad and Tobago, the large number of foreign consultants—the beneficiaries of government-to-government

contracts during the decade of the oil boom—fuelled an artificial hike in rents to capitalize on the high salaries and housing allowances given to these foreign experts. The influx of tourists has caused similar rapid increases in the price of land in tourist havens like Barbados, the Bahamas, and Jamaica. Attempts at controlling and even rolling back rents have been made in Trinidad and Tobago, but this action still has not brought prices within the range of unemployed and underemployed youths, and this further contributes to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and uncertainty about the future.

### 6. *The family*

The vast literature on family structure in the English-speaking Caribbean points to the centrality of women in their roles as mothers. As major (and often the only) income-producers in the household, low-income women are often *de facto* heads of households which, because of the economic marginality of low-income men, become matrifocal and matricentric. Although legal marital union might be considered the social ideal, low-income women opt for a number of adaptive strategies in order to cope with their socioeconomic realities.

Recent controversies over analyses of West Indian families put forward two possibilities. One is that the black low-income family is a variant of elite family structure, representing a response to the economic inability of often unemployed and underemployed lower-income men to perform their expected family responsibilities. The other, as an example of Herskovitsian reinterpretation, is that the female-headed, matrifocal household is an essentially different type of family organization, based on separate principles and cultural values retained from West African culture. This latter notion brings to the forefront the strength and support that comes from the extended family, opportunities for cultural transmission in the "grandmother family" and the significance of collateral kinship...concepts which are seldom considered in analysing lower-income families in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The salient points of both arguments are the economic marginality which robs low-income

men of their status-defining functions, and the existence of a male-dominated structure which remains insensitive to the economic importance of women and ignorant and/or unsympathetic to the extent to which the stability of the entire society depend on her. Full comprehension of this fact would demand more serious attention to the employment and training of women, who in most of the English-speaking Caribbean register almost double the unemployment figure for unemployed males. In such a line of thinking, urgent importance also attaches to the establishment of day-care centres and other facilities that provide support for working mothers.

East Indian family organization shows a different structural formation and continuity. A significant majority of East Indian children grow up in male-headed households, in contrast with the patterns cited for the low-income Afro-Caribbean family. Another major difference between these two family systems is the age and conditions under which cohabitation and marriage are institutionalized. Customary law prescribes a much earlier age for both sexes for East Indians, while among Afro-Caribbeans, the ideal and modal age of marriage and cohabitation is much higher. This difference has significant effects on the organization of family life, indicating a paternity that is relatively more fixed for the East Indian family. Although these unions appear to be longer lasting than for the Afro-Caribbean families, more pronounced family stability and security are not necessarily indicated, for the presence of a father figure does not necessarily imply harmony and stability in a family. In fact, many father-centred homes spanning the race/class spectrum are plagued with wife and child abuse, incest, alcoholism and other deviant behaviour that would certainly be more injurious to the positive development of a child than a matrifocal home, or one in which the father plays a peripheral role. Research cited in an earlier section of this paper reported that drug abuse was found to be highest among adolescents from stable homes with two-parent families, indicating a fundamental breakdown in family life that is not restricted to female-centred homes.

The importance of family stability in shaping the lives of youth warrants a closer look

at the influence of race, class, culture and economic power on Caribbean family structure. Perhaps what is needed is a change of focus from the "problems" or "disorganized" low-income families to a clearer view of the practical strategies used by these economically disadvantaged groups in order to organize their survival and continuity. Such an approach could lead governments to recognize the economic importance of women and accelerate measures to support and facilitate their economic autonomy. Useful, too, as a strategy for effecting a more stable and secure society, would be an analysis of the flexibility, adaptability and creativity of lower-income strategies for the sharing and maximizing of resources, usually centred around indigenous economic traditions such as *sou-sou* —the pooling and rotating of scarce resources— and *gayap* —co-operative, self-help, collective labour— and of ways in which these traditional strategies might serve as models for more relevant economic development policies in the English-speaking Caribbean.

### 7. Young women

Young women in the English-speaking Caribbean remain the group most affected by all the dysfunctional aspects of the overall society. Rampant unemployment, inadequate educational preparation, a dearth of post-educational skills training, competition with men in a male-oriented labour market, social customs and attitudes that —under the pretence of the protection of women— serve to limit and discourage full participation in the society's development, early pregnancies that impose the overwhelming responsibility of single parenthood in societies that lack the infrastructural systems to assist young unwed mothers and women as heads of households, all combine to make young Caribbean women the sector with the least alternatives and opportunities for improving their life chances.

The harsh reality of the situation faced by young women can be evidenced by the countless reports of demands for sexual favours in order to obtain and retain employment. Another indication is the "new" immigration of the

1970s, which differed from older patterns in that men were overwhelmingly outnumbered by women, who often left behind established households, husbands and children (Burgess and James-Gray, 1981).

The growing prevalence of drug abuse in the Caribbean presents specific problems for young women. In Trinidad and Tobago, where drug abuse has reached near-epidemic proportions, informal research reveals an increasing number of young women who resort to prostitution in exchange for drugs. In fact, case histories document an ever-larger number of cases of women who are deliberately introduced to drugs in order that they might be forced into prostitution. In the Bahamas and Barbados, the rise in prostitution has been linked to the influence of tourism. Young women from Guyana, Colombia and the Dominican Republic represent a rich source of prostitution "finds" for male-dominated international prostitution rings. In Grenada prostitution has allegedly mushroomed, and in Bermuda high rates of illegitimacy have been attributed to the "holiday atmosphere" generated by large-scale tourism, specifically the conspicuous consumption of alcohol by tourists (Manning, 1979).

An increasing challenge for young Caribbean women is that of teenage pregnancy, which the data show is disproportionately prevalent among low-income families. Teenage pregnancy is simultaneously a product of social circumstances and a contribution to those circumstances, since it helps to perpetuate the limited life chances of this group and hampers the marital, social and emotional growth of both mother and child, while presenting a physical risk for both of them. Recent data show that for every Caribbean country, teenage pregnancies were higher thirty years ago than they are today. Still, adolescent fertility rates continue to be in the excess of 100 per 1 000 in most Caribbean countries. Thus, during 1980, these rates were as high as 120 in Guyana, 125 in Grenada, 133 in Jamaica, 143 in St. Kitts-Nevis, 157 in St. Lucia, and 164 in St. Vincent. In Trinidad and Tobago, the figure declined from 148 per 1 000 in 1950, to 85 per 1 000 in 1980 (Qagdeo, 1984). The data show that 60% of all first births in several Caribbean countries occur to teenagers, and 50% of these are to women 17 years old and under: an

age group that is most susceptible to such reproductive dangers as prolonged labour, other obstetrical complications and premature babies.

### 8. *Culture and identity of young people*

The cultural scenario that Caribbean youth have inherited, the main features of which were summarized in this study in the section on the social and cultural framework, is characterized by psychological, cultural and economic dependence, and has spawned a crop of "Afro-Saxons" who still rely on external sources for defining and legitimatizing their identity. Lacking the self-confidence to acknowledge and appreciate their own art, culture, beliefs and approaches to life, young people—with tacit agreement and subtle direction from their leaders—have turned outside for self-acknowledgement, self-definition, and self-validation. Their heroes are Michael Jackson, Prince, and Madonna; culinary tastes are geared to pizzas and a range of North American fast foods. Musical preferences—aided and abetted by radio stations which minimize the playing of local music—have little to do either lyrically or musically with the rhythms and concerns of their native countries. The fashion influence is direct, immediate and unadulterated. In the humid 90 degrees-in-the-s hade heat of their tropical climes, youth can be seen sporting leather jackets, woollen sweaters, and knee-high leather boots suitable for North American winters.

Harmless though they might seem, these signals are mere outward manifestations of a deeper eradication and contempt of self, history and culture. This process has brought about a cultural alienation that has invited and feted the lack of commitment and confidence youth show in the development of these Caribbean societies which so desperately need the inputs and participation of their youth. These young people cannot be blamed entirely, since their involvement has neither been aggressively sought, nor dutifully encouraged as an imperative of the development process. Because they have not been presented with their own heroes, a recognition and appreciation of their own culture and history and a validation of their existence, they have sought their cultural

moorings in other harbours. A most confusing and discouraging feature for populations which comprise large percentages of visibly African-derived peoples, is the persistent correlation between recognition of and adherence to indigenous African-derived cultural traditions (particularly in the religious sphere, the area in which African retentions have been proven to be the least diluted) and poverty, dispossession and low socioeconomic status. For culture has been so vested with economic, social and political significance that European cultural influences have remained synonymous with high status and the association of African-derived culture with low social and economic status has persisted.

Cultural dependency and economic dependency are so mutually reinforcing that to minimize or ignore the centrality of the cultural dynamic in the development process, as most of the English-speaking Caribbean countries have done, is to have made a false start. Some of the larger Caribbean nations have made commendable attempts at integrating the dynamics of politics, culture and economics. Guyana's policies of self-reliance have dictated experimentation and discovery of an entire range of indigenous foods, and encouraged the development of an exciting range of products in pottery, wood, textiles, etc. Very early in its post-colonial history, Jamaica developed and implemented a fully spelled-out cultural policy. Consequently, Jamaica can easily be considered the English-speaking Caribbean country with the most highly evolved sense of nationalism, this in spite of the tremendous political, social and economic challenges which that country is continuing to experience. Even though Jamaica—particularly because of its proximity to the United States—is also exposed to real threats of cultural imperialism, it remains well-grounded in its indigenous culture and traditions, with a highly advanced industry of cultural products.

A cultural policy for Trinidad and Tobago has still not been well articulated. Hence the full birth of a true national identity and culture has been aborted. Lacking is the cultural will for seeking viable solutions to unemployment through the establishment of industries based on indigenous art forms: steelband factories, recording industries, food processing, etc., or for capitalizing on expanding markets for medicinal

teas, herbs and aromatic spices. These and other opportunities have been doomed to remain mere talking points as young people become unemployed and addicted to alien cultural values. The creation of training schools in the arts is another vehicle for both reinforcing an indigenous culture and providing solutions to severe economic problems. Such culturally-focussed projects could generate self-employment for artists, wood carvers, steelband tuners, etc. Local furniture industries could employ and train youth, not only in their creative development, but in managing and marketing functions. While there are some token ventures in some of these areas, there does not exist the aggressive thrust needed to stimulate the development and successful implementation of old ideas or to inspire more creative innovations.

The role of the media in preserving and promoting a national culture and identity and in defending national and regional cultural and political sovereignty cannot be overemphasized. The media's impact on the minds of young nationals bears a tremendous responsibility and obligation in the shaping and directing of attitudes, tastes and priorities. Yet the media in the English-speaking Caribbean figure among the most serious adversaries to the forging of a national culture and a regional identity. Even more dangerous than the irrelevant and counter-productive images forced on the minds of the young is the repeated failure to provide outlets for self-expression, creativity and, by extension, self-validation. This stifles the energy and forces that fuel this process of self-validation. Instead of employing young people in the creation of products that reflect their own environment and life experiences for local education and entertainment, a steady diet of canned foreign productions is forced into the consciousness of unsuspecting Caribbean youth. Ironically, while Afro-Americans reject the inanity of television

programmes which neither reflect, project nor seriously address their lifestyles, and while both black and white Americans protest against the gruesome violence entering their homes under the guise of entertainment, Caribbean youth, through their State-owned media, are readily exposed to these negative influences.

The danger of television lies in the very nature of the medium, which, in its projection of exact images, leaves little room for imagination. Consequently, Caribbean youth are more familiar with affairs in New York, Los Angeles and Dallas than with the festivals, customs and endangered traditions of their own countries. Television advertising, both local and foreign, continues to project beauty standards that, at best, are at variance with the physical composition of the populace and, at worst, perpetuate the racist perceptions of the colonial period. Sophisticated communications technology which now enables Caribbean countries to receive American television stations directly is a serious threat to the ability of Caribbean youth to shape their own views of their world and of themselves.

It is in this environment that young people in the English-speaking Caribbean struggle for self-identity, which they were led to believe would emerge with independence, and a national culture and identity which, through its priority attention to nation-building, would re-establish new attitudes to work, race, class, religion, beauty, etc. Pursuit of this aim should, out of necessity and commitment, unite the talents of all citizens and, by design, ensure total participation and integration of the nation's youth in the express purpose of utilizing all its human resources. It is this right which young people were led to believe was theirs, and which now appears to have been abrogated by the myopic vision of their elders.

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