Deconstructing Creole
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The complexity that really matters:
The role of political economy in creole genesis

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1 Introduction

This chapter considers some of the linguistic consequences of the political economies of the different European colonial regimes in the Americas with the goal of underscoring the considerable impact that social, political, and economic context has on the results of language contact in general, as well as on the results of creolization in particular. In order to do this, we adopt the Matrix of Creolization framework originally proposed by Alleyne (1971) to argue that the social and economic factors which constituted key parts of the matrix within which power relations were realized in the colonies (that is, the political economy of each colonial regime) played a significant role in Creole genesis. Focusing on the Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we contend that the political economy which prevailed within the sphere of influence of each major European colonial power differed sufficiently from the political economy of the other colonizing nations to have had palpable linguistic consequences, which are the results of discrete and practices and processes (Woolard 1985: 745), especially in terms of the development of Creole languages.

During the first centuries of colonization of the Caribbean, the political economy of the Spanish colonial system differed from that of the British, the Dutch, and (to a lesser extent) the French and the Portuguese. It is our hypothesis that differences in political economy can do much to account for the fact that Spanish-lexifier Creoles are understood as being relatively rare in the Americas (but perhaps not completely absent, see Lipski 2005, 2006). Beyond the specific issue of the ‘missing Spanish Creoles’ (McWhorter 2000), however, we also argue that the differences between the French and English-lexifier Creoles themselves cannot be satisfactorily explained without taking into account the political economies that typified each colonial regime and the links between these manifestations of Empire and current efforts to construct ‘expert’ knowledge about the speech communities distributed within them.
Arguments about language genesis are among the most tendentious discussions in contemporary Creole Studies and have been at the center of debate since the inception of the field. Over the last two decades, research on Creole genesis has generally fallen into two areas (Arends 1995): the first is considered ‘linguistic’ and includes the study of early Creole documents; the second area tends toward the ‘non-linguistic’, the investigation of sociohistorical and demographic factors contributing to Creole genesis. This latter area of research underscores the importance of ‘extralinguistic’ phenomena, recognizing elements such as social inequality, politics, and culture as useful in determining and describing the nature of language contact. In this chapter, we look at these two approaches to Creole Studies as interconnected in order to offer an account of how and why strikingly different linguistic scenarios emerged under the different experiments in colonialism carried out by European powers in the Caribbean. This approach differs markedly from other accounts of genesis. However, we are less concerned with presenting our own arguments as singularly authoritative than with grappling with fundamental questions regarding the relationship among various positions that linguists have put forward to account for the origins of Creole languages.

In recent work by a number of linguists (e.g. Alleyne 1996; McWhorter 2000; Chaudenson 2001; Aceto 2003), there seems to exist a widening gap between the empiricist and often microanalytical approach with which specific varieties are analyzed and categorized (mainly in terms of superstrate and substrate influences) and the desire to take into consideration relevant (socio)linguistic phenomena from the Caribbean region as a whole. Our efforts to find our bearings amidst these and other positions demand first that we look at the relationship between theory and data from individual languages and then ask if it is possible that the generalizations made about Creoles (e.g. Chaudenson’s 2001 view of Caribbean Creoles as the outcome of one language dominating another) are actually more appropriate if we apply them to a more restricted group of languages, e.g. the French-lexifier Creoles only. Studying these smaller groups of languages one by one rather than considering Creole origins categorically can reveal that seemingly contradictory assertions are less opposed to one another than has often been assumed (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985: 23).

One of the most important publications in this area is Mintz (1971). Mintz’s approach squarely addresses broad political and historical issues, yet at the same time it can be said to manifest some degree of reluctance to provide a close analysis of questions that touch on issues such as power relations, control, and marginalization. Surprisingly, this line of investigation has received limited attention from creolists in the hundreds of inquiries into language genesis completed since the first conference of creolists in Mona in 1968. We maintain that this hiatus between empirical discussions of linguistic forms and functions and the critical analysis of constructions such as race, class, nation, and even ‘Creole’ is due on the one hand to the need for more detailed attention to political economy, and on the other to what Foucault (1980) called the dominant ‘regime of truth’, i.e., the embedding of academic discourses in extant proc-
societies, of daily life, the time, genesis. Creole admission displays disproportionate having Creoles’s limited access to transfer. Ginsberg (1976) defend the hypothesis that Creoles were formed in Africa as pidgins and then brought to the Americas as fledgling languages. He calls this process of transfer ‘Afrogenesis,’ a term which was coined much earlier by Richard Allsopp (1976) to refer not only to the case of genesis but to the preponderant role of the African substratum. The central argument of the text is its opposition to what McWhorter calls the ‘limited access model,’ or ‘superstratist argument.’ This is the claim that “…plantation Creoles of the New World and the Indian Ocean developed as a result of African slaves having had limited access to the lexifier language spoken on plantations, due to the disproportion of blacks to whites in such settings” (McWhorter 2000: 1). The author admits that this is merely one concept that can be extracted from the literature on Creole genesis. Nevertheless, he seems reluctant to accept the fact that no account of genesis by any linguist can be simplistically reduced to this single concept. At the same time, it seems impossible for a theory of language contact that sets out to account for the outcomes of such contact to avoid the ‘access’ factor.

We prefer to think of McWhorter’s ‘access factor’ as the ‘interaction factor,’ considered not only in terms of density, mode, and access to institutions, but also in terms of daily experiences, practices, and social relationships mediated by language. Under all of these parameters, every case of European-African contact whether in settler or slave societies, or in Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Dutch or Danish colonies, qualifies as ‘limited,’ to some extent, in terms of participation in institutions mediated by language (e.g. school, religion, courts, plantations and other venues for social and economic interaction) and in terms of speakers’ reification of processes and norms that
characterize intercultural communication. Yet access is certainly not a categorical case of ‘limited’ or ‘unlimited’, but one of degrees of limitation.

2.1 Correlating colonization and types of interaction

The correlation between the nationality of the colonizing European power (e.g. Spanish vs. British) and the degrees of richness/poverty characteristic of interaction, itself apparently corresponds with the extent of pervasiveness of African elements in Creoles. Imagine a map of Europe with a linguistic map of the Caribbean superimposed on it. As we move from the Mediterranean (Spain) toward the North (through Portugal, France, England, and into Holland), we also move from relatively few easily identified African elements in the Creole languages generated by these systems of colonization (e.g. the Caribbean dialects of Spanish) to quite substantial African elements (e.g. Berbice Dutch, Saramaccan). This should set us thinking about the effects, not just of ‘access’, but of all the other factors which distinguish one system of colonization from another (e.g. characteristics that distinguish Spanish colonial policy from British colonial policy). In accordance with the critique put forward by McWhorter (2000: 197), we are not talking about who were “the kinder, gentler, slavemasters” but rather about identifiable, systemic interactional patterns. As suggested by Mintz (1961), slavery did not exist as a universal social phenomenon, but was shaped deeply by the different strategies of economic development in the countries and colonies that instituted it. Thus if we want to understand the emergence of the varieties that developed in the case of the colonization of the Greater Antilles, then the relevant question cannot shift to the one McWhorter centers – “why did Spanish Creoles not develop?” This question obscures the diversity of situations within and outside the Spanish Caribbean and pushes aside as irrelevant important sociohistorical circumstances and ideological frames. To counter this act of erasure, evidence such as the following needs to be considered:

i. When slavery became important in Puerto Rico and Cuba (but not in what is now the Dominican Republic) in the late 1700s, there were already large numbers of Spanish speakers of ‘mixed’ racial descent on these islands (Mintz 1971: 483).

ii. British colonization of the Caribbean was characterized not only by the presence of forts in West Africa, but also by the absence of: a firm Creole culture, a numerically significant intermediate group, and institutions that could unify the colonial population (ibid.: 488).

iii. Though the outcomes of linguistic creolization (the English-lexifier Creole languages) within the British Empire were comparatively similar, the paths leading to the existence of these languages were shaped by economies that differ significantly one from the other (see Higman 1995).

These three points serve as a reminder that even research on historical events relies on metadiscursive practices by which researchers and scholarship are situated in social, political, and historical terms. The paragraphs below focus on describing the sets of
conditions that in certain societies led Africans and their descendants to create linguistic systems that lend themselves to be interpreted as Africanized European languages (e.g. the Spanish Caribbean dialects) and in others to create varieties that lend themselves to be interpreted as Europeanized African languages (e.g. the 'non-decreolized' English-lexifier Creoles).

3 Beyond correlation: The descriptive and explanatory power of the Matrix of Creolization in relation to key debates in creolistics

The Matrix of Creolization that is described and utilized in this chapter, using a framework originally proposed by Alleyne (1971), with its emphasis on interaction, aims to take sociohistorical analysis beyond the quantitative model that serves as the hallmark of much contemporary sociolinguistic work on Creole languages (e.g. the traditionally Labovian paradigm). It rejects the idea that an analysis of genesis should be built on the simplistic idea that 'language reflects society'. We see, among other things, that language is socially constituted and that language contact in the Caribbean during the time of the Atlantic Slave Trade was influenced by a number of factors, some ideological (e.g. religion, the social construction of race) and others more material (e.g. geography, economy, historical links). Several different frameworks put forward by a number of critics (i.e. Harris 1981; Romaine 1984; Cameron 1997) call for precisely such an approach in contemporary studies. We see their critiques of sociolinguistic methodology as relevant for work that intends to describe the contexts in which Creole languages were formed.

With this in mind we see our project (i.e. to better understand the relationship between political economic systems and language genesis) in two parts: our first goal is two-fold, to start with the description of prototypical European systems of colonization (British, French, and Spanish) alongside West African sociocultural systems and then to describe these in terms of patterns of interaction. In doing so, superstrate and substrate influences are each described emphasizing three different sets of phenomena:

i. economy;
ii. ideology, culture, and linguistics;
iii. politics.

This schema allows for the contextualization of linguistic interaction within (as well as between and among) individual colonies culturally and historically by showing that language genesis occurred within systems shaped by broader economic, political, and social forces (e.g. patterns of production and consumption, tensions between colony and metropole, traditions that assigned divergent roles to individuals on the basis of factors such as gender, origin, religion, and status). The options/choices/paths available to individual speakers and speech communities determined and were determined by these systems. Moreover, speakers and communities are recognized as sustaining
and creating anew socioeconomic and cultural structures that rewarded, penalized, demanded, and made unnecessary specific types of linguistic behavior.

Focusing on historical situations characterized by rapid social change and the constant renegotiation of the social contract in the Caribbean colonies, our final goal is perhaps the most challenging: to respond to earlier calls for positioning language and sociolinguistic phenomena in terms of matrices, thus our discussion of the Matrix of Creolization. The meta-critiques offered by the aforementioned critics of sociolinguistic theory and practice offer a set of principles that can guide the interpretation of this Matrix so that language can be related to “rationality, intentionality, and the function of social agents and human actors” (Romaine 1984: 26).

Such concerns require that we reject the assumption that the structures characteristic of plantation economies existed before the languages spoken in the colonies emerged (Bickerton 1981; Chaudenson 2001). In fact, they remind us that African and European languages are among the ingredients that shaped interactions among and between the races, in the forts of West Africa, on the ships to and from the Americas, in the fields of plantations, and in the transatlantic region’s many struggles for freedom. This view calls for the study of linguistic phenomena in sociohistorical context and releases hierarchies of race, class, and gender (all characteristics of European colonialism which shape any scholarly understanding of language) from their banishment to the category of non-linguistic phenomena. Recognizing these and other manifestations of hierarchy as important to theories of Creole origins, we attempt to create a space in which each individual speech variety is considered “as it emerged, as part of the social, interacting with other modes of behavior and just as important as any of them” (Cameron 1997: 82, original emphasis) and to see the study of language as an ongoing product of academic ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault 1978, 1980, 1991). For these reasons, we find it necessary to insist in the most emphatic manner possible that the various configurations of African, indigenous Caribbean, and European languages that emerged in the Caribbean Creole space had a significant influence over the economic, political, and ideological factors that in turn played a role in shaping Caribbean Creole languages and cultures. In our view, this complex and dialectical relationship among language, means of production, power relations, and ideology constitutes the central dynamic, not only in the development of individual varieties and characteristically Caribbean forms of language, but also in the processes of language variation and change at work in all of the languages on the planet. However, considering that the historical contexts in which knowledge about processes of genesis and variation has been produced are a key component in this relationship, this discussion is not limited to the roles that speakers played in creating language. This is because even the most ‘objective’ of linguists’ descriptions impose systems of classification that are “doubly determined”, linked to “overt political taxonomies” and “the struggle over the monopoly of legitimate ideological production” (Bourdieu 1991: 168–169).

A key debate in creolistics which the Matrix of Creolization can help us to address is that surrounding the notion of Creole Exceptionalism (see DeGraff 2001, 2003, 2004,
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2005; Bickerton 2004; DeGraff & Walicek 2005). The position against Creole Exceptionalism has been most vociferously and rigorously advanced by Michel DeGraff (2003). Like some of the other discourses gaining currency among contemporary creolists, DeGraff’s key argument resuscitates and elaborates a position that received some attention in the 1970s which suggested that: (1) Creole genesis is not a special phenomenon requiring special theories and processes; (2) genesis can be accommodated within general principles of language contact and language change; and (3) within this set of general principles, there is no subset of linguistic principles that applies specifically and exclusively to the development of Creoles as a group. Immediately called into question is the need for a single special genesis hypothesis to account commonly for all Creoles, as well as linguists’ desire to treat these languages categorically as a distinct typological or phylogenetic class. This set of assertions has far-reaching implications for future work in creolistics, since apart from the issue of genesis, Creole Studies could be argued to be just like any other linguistics. As Mufwene (2001: 75) explains:

There is really no particular reason why the developments of creoles should not be treated as consequences of normal linguistic interaction in specific ecological conditions of linguistic contacts involving not only speakers (as in any monolingual speech community) but also different language varieties. Creoles should prompt us to rethink some established assumptions about language change and the role of ecology.

These and related concerns have lead some to question why we have a special sub-discipline called creolistics (e.g. Muysken 1988; Mühlhäusler 1993; Lefebvre 2000).

The main arguments put forward in this chapter attempt to show that it is impossible to describe and analyze Creole languages in any comprehensive way without taking into account such ‘non-linguistic’ or ‘extralinguistic’ factors as political economy. If we are able to prove this hypothesis and if Creoles are not exceptional, then we must also conclude that not one of the world’s languages can be described or analyzed without taking into account the relations of power in the community or communities where it is spoken. In this way, the sharp distinction between ‘linguistic’ and ‘non-linguistic’ mentioned in section 1 above must be abandoned, not just in the study of Creoles but in the study of any human language. Moving in this direction, we take issue with Chaudenson’s (2001: 314) warning that “it is hazardous to extend data and theories concerning creolization to the analysis of Creole cultural systems”.

Ironically, DeGraff’s anti-exceptionalist position and his emphasis on the language-ideology interface, when taken to its logical conclusion, in one way actually supports McWhorter’s contention that creolistics has played and will continue to play a very special role in linguistic science. This is because among all human languages, Creoles are often the ones that force us most to question such fundamental but highly dubious linguistic notions as langue vs. parole, competence vs. performance, I- vs. E-language, internal vs. external change, L1 vs. L2 acquisition, simplification vs. complexity, the genetic classification of languages, the idealized monoglossic speaker in a
homogeneous language community, language as a computational system, etc. Thus Creoles, precisely because they are not exceptional have the potential to play an exceptional role in redefining what is 'normal' both in terms of the objects of linguistic study and in terms of the conceptual frameworks that we use to study them.

4 Toward a typology of colonization and creolization: Political economy and the continua, matrix, and space of Afro-Caribbean creolization

In this work, we use the term 'political economy' to refer to a constellation of political, economic, and ideological/cultural/linguistic parameters that define a typology of colonization and creolization created by two of the principal agents in the Afro-Caribbean creolization process from the end of the 15th century to the end of the 18th century: (i) the African and Afro-Caribbean working classes (substrates) and (ii) the European and Creole ruling classes (superstrates), i.e. the two migrant groupings [to the Caribbean] – the masters and the slaves – neither of which was able to transfer more than a portion of its cultural traditions to the islands (Mintz 1971: 484). Although we recognize the important contributions of other populations in this process, such as indigenous Caribbean peoples, indentured laborers, the Irish, and other European working classes, the scholarly attention that they so desperately deserve is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Following the model in Table 1, we will refer to each of the continua of possible settings in relation to each of the aforementioned parameters as an Afro-Caribbean Creolization Continuum. When considered together, the entire set of Afro-Caribbean Creolization Continua defines the Afro-Caribbean Creolization Matrix schematized in Figure 1, following a model suggested by Alleyne (1971). The Afro-Caribbean Creolization Matrix, in turn, can be used to describe the Afro-Caribbean Creolization Space that typifies a particular Caribbean island society at a particular time in its history. The Afro-Caribbean Creolization Space changes shape as the parametric settings change along one or more of the continua that defines its Matrix. Because the substrate and superstrate economies, politics, and ideologies differ in time and space, the Afro-Caribbean Creole Space differs from one period of time to another, from one island society to the next, and within a given island society.
**Table 1. Typology of colonization and creolization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English colonies</th>
<th>French colonies</th>
<th>Spanish colonies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of colonial era creolization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less interaction between Africans &amp; others</td>
<td></td>
<td>More interaction between Africans &amp; others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Largely restricted to Afro-Caribbean population</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encompasses entire society</td>
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<tr>
<td>African influences concentrated but narrow</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dispersed but broad</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creoles as markers of difference/ resistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Creolization of entire culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europeanized African languages</td>
<td></td>
<td>Africanized European languages</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Superstrates (European and Creole ruling classes)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Superstrate economies</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugar monoculture</td>
<td>Big sugar established well before 18thC</td>
<td>Big sugar established just before 19thC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed sugar/ non-sugar economy</td>
<td>Early switch to private corporate financing</td>
<td>Late switch to corporate financing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugar production encouraged</td>
<td>More labor-intensive agriculture</td>
<td>Less labor-intensive agriculture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Large plantations</td>
<td>More capital-intensive agriculture</td>
<td>Less capital-intensive agriculture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crops require local industrial processing</td>
<td>Smaller plantations, individual blocks/ plots</td>
<td>Little or no local processing required</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugar production encouraged</td>
<td>No early sugar production in metropole</td>
<td>Sugar production discouraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners remote or absentee</td>
<td>Inhospitable climatic conditions</td>
<td>Personal relations between owner and slave</td>
<td>Wider range of climatic conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Superstrate ideologies/ cultures/ linguistics</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonization = purely economic enterprise</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colonization = 'civilizing' mission</td>
<td>Integration into metropole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximizing profits/ primitive accumulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extension of Reconquista/ Inquisición</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No recent experience of 'ethnic cleansing'</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stress on spread of metropolitan culture, language</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress on apartheid</td>
<td>Modern Mediterranean notion of slavery</td>
<td>Medieval Mediterranean notion of slavery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern capitalist notion of slavery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fuzzy concept of slavery/ more mobility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid concept of slavery/ less mobility</td>
<td>Rigid/ binary concept of race</td>
<td>Fuzzy/ graded concept of race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid/ binary concept of race</td>
<td>Strong tendency to avoid interracial contact</td>
<td>Interracial contact common</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong tendency to avoid interracial contact</td>
<td>Less powerful church</td>
<td>More powerful church</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less powerful church</td>
<td>Less aggressive evangelism</td>
<td>More aggressive evangelism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protestantism/ Calvinism/ notion of 'God's elite/ elect'  \( \rightarrow \) Catholicism/ universalism

Church supports planters  \( \rightarrow \) Church opposes planters

Limited prior contact with Africa  \( \rightarrow \) Significant prior contact with Africa

No prior creolization with Africans  \( \rightarrow \) Prior creolization with Africans

Remote from Mediterranean contact zone  \( \rightarrow \) Part of Mediterranean contact zone

**Superstrate politics**

- Colony-based/ decentralized/ rural  \( \rightarrow \) Metropole-based/ centralized/ urban
- Slave colonies  \( \rightarrow \) Settler colonies
- Planters form conscious class from 17th C  \( \rightarrow \) No conscious planter class until late 18th C
- Planters vs. slaves  \( \rightarrow \) Metropole vs. colonial elite
- Government by and for planter class  \( \rightarrow \) Metropole often opposes planters
- Elites retain European identity  \( \rightarrow \) Elites adopt local Creole identity
- Bourgeois civil law  \( \rightarrow \) Feudal Crown law
- New bourgeois slave laws  \( \rightarrow \) Old feudal slave codes

**Substrates (African and Afro-Caribbean peoples)**

**Substrate economies/ demographics**

- Reluctant involvement in formal economy  \( \rightarrow \) Creation of full subsistence economies
- Struggle for subsistence plots  \( \rightarrow \) Many Afro-Caribbean people become peasants
- Marginalized subsistence economies  \( \rightarrow \) Creation of colony-wide subsistence economies
- Greater ratio Africans: others  \( \rightarrow \) Lower ratio Africans: others
- Few or no peasants  \( \rightarrow \) Large peasant sector
- Afro-Caribbean population replaced by import  \( \rightarrow \) A-C population replaced by natural increase
- Higher ratio slaves: emancipated  \( \rightarrow \) Lower ratio slaves: emancipated
- Higher sex ratio (M:F) among slaves  \( \rightarrow \) Normal sex ratio among slaves
- Low longevity and birthrate among slaves  \( \rightarrow \) Normal longevity and birthrate
- Most slaves field hands on large plantations  \( \rightarrow \) Most slaves domestics, craftspeople
- Mutual survival bonds \( \rightarrow \) community apart  \( \rightarrow \) Integration into colony-wide community
From 1500 to 1800, the substrate and superstrate agents under one colonial regime (e.g. Spanish, British, French) typically situated themselves differently along each continuum than did their counterparts under another regime. In the vast majority of cases, the political-economic regimes established by the Northern Europeans (primarily the Dutch and British) define one pole of each continuum (hereafter the Northern pole), while those of the Southern Europeans (the Spanish and to a lesser extent the Portuguese) define the other pole (hereafter the Southern pole), with the French beginning their colonial trajectory in the Caribbean somewhere in between, but moving decisively toward the Northern pole by the end of the 17th century (Chaudenson 2001: 102, 113).

For example, while the British generally attempted to establish sugar monoculture plantation economies in their Caribbean territories, the Spanish established more diversified small-holder settler economies in their possessions (Stinchcombe 1995: 95). Similarly, the Afro-Caribbean working classes on the Spanish islands (apart from their experience with slavery, which up until the turn of the 19th century, was often limited to a single generation) participated as agents in the formal economy, playing a relatively active role in shaping that economy as subsistence producers involved in horticulture and/or fishing, traders, and craftspeople, whereas their counterparts on the British islands involved themselves more reluctantly in the formal economy, reserving their highest levels of energy and enthusiasm for their participation in the informal economies that they themselves created in the interstices of slave society, such as household plots, provisions plots, and Saturday or Sunday markets (Tomich 2000).
It should be borne in mind, however, that even under a single colonial regime, each Caribbean island, each speech community, and each speaker of a Caribbean Creole represents a unique Creolization Space. For example, while the early success of sugar in the lowlands of Jamaica under the British made them a paradigmatic example of the prototypically Northern Creolization Space that came to characterize the British Caribbean, the early failure of sugar and most other plantation crops on British Anguilla,
the subsequent departure of the majority of the planter class from the island, and the relatively equitable redistribution of land among the Afro-Caribbean population that remained made the Creolization Space on Anguilla very different from that inhabited by most of the populations of the British colonies in the Caribbean.

Moreover, the Creolization Space on a particular island could and did change radically at different points during its colonial history. An obvious example is Jamaica, where the shift from Spanish to British colonial rule in 1655 brought about the eventual complete reorientation of the Creolization Space there from a typically Southern to a typically Northern one. Even under the same colonial regime, however, the Creolization Space did change significantly over time, as was the case in the Spanish islands toward the end of the 18th century, when the Bourbon Reforms were reshaping the political economy of Spanish colonialism to conform more closely to the Northern model (Stinchcombe 1995: 15).

Following Table 1, we will now consider where the political economies of the different colonial regime situate themselves along the various Afro-Caribbean Creolization Continua during the period from 1500 to 1800.

4.1 Superstrate economies

In the pre-19th century colonial Caribbean, the economic continua created by the European and Creole ruling classes are defined primarily by a capital intensive plantation slave economy based on sugar at the Northern pole and a diversified economy of small holdings, mines, ranching, limited and largely unsuccessful plantation agriculture, etc. at the Southern pole (Mintz 1971: 484–486).

Craton (1997: 8–31) traces the history of sugar cultivation on the Iberian peninsula as well as in the Caribbean. Sugar had been cultivated in Morocco (perhaps using African slaves) since the 9th century and the Moors made Iberia a center for sugar production. The sugar industry expanded in both Portugal and Spain immediately after the Reconquista, first using moriscos (Muslims who had been forced to convert to Christianity) as serfs and later by utilizing African slaves. Developed in the Canary Islands in the early 16th century, the colono system, whereby cane was grown and processed in small units by a mixture of share-cropping peasants from Spain and African slaves became the model for sugar production in much of the Spanish Caribbean. A similar system typifies early sugar cultivation in Brazil. Under this system, the Portuguese were able to make Brazilian sugar an essential component of the vibrant transatlantic trade involving Portugal, West Africa, and Brazil which was in place by the end of the 16th century.

When they conquered northeastern Brazil in 1630, the Dutch completely revamped the sugar industry there, by increasing both the size of production units and the inflow of African slaves from their newly conquered forts in West Africa, by making credit available for consolidation of holdings, machinery, provisions, etc. by introducing the most advanced techniques for growing and processing cane, by laying the
groundwork for an extremely rigid and racially based slave code, and by consolidating and expanding the transatlantic trade first established by the Portuguese through the incorporation of Brazilian sugar production into their vast refining and distribution networks. The Dutch also tapped the commercial and cane production expertise of Jewish refugees from the Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil, given that the Jews had played a key role over the preceding four centuries in proto-capitalist sugar plantation experiments in Palestine, Cyprus, Crete, Sicily, and Iberia itself.

When the Dutch and their Jewish allies were expelled from northeastern Brazil some twenty years later, they transferred this powerful mercantile-agro-industrial complex to their colonies in the Guianas, to the French colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique, to British Barbados, and to St. Croix (Chaudenson 2001: 136). Within a few decades of adopting the Dutch ‘method of Pernambuco’, Barbados had become the first Caribbean territory to qualitatively transform sugar production in such a way as to make it the cornerstone for the establishment of capitalism as a world system. By the end of the 17th century, the British had wrested control of the seas from the Dutch. In the process, they completely appropriated the Dutch model and switched from an earlier preference for tobacco and other crops that could be cultivated on smallholdings to focus on large-scale sugar monoculture. But the Dutch emphasis on control over trade eventually shifted with the British to an emphasis on control over industrial production. In this way, the transatlantic trade became the primary engine for the development of British manufacturing capacity in the early 18th century and the major force behind the Industrial Revolution that followed (Williams 1944; Stinchcombe 1995). Meanwhile, Brazil reverted for the next two centuries to the pre-capitalist mode of sugar production that the Dutch sought to replace there (Craton 1997: 29).

Thus, the two major poles of the superstrate economic continuum were established in the Caribbean. At the Northern pole, the British favored sugar monoculture on large, densely populated, labor- and capital-intensive plantations situated in low lying, wet, disease ridden environments, which relied heavily on private corporate finance, slave labor, a significant degree of local industrial processing, metropolitan refining and distribution networks, and absentee plutocratic European landowners who used a group of European or Euro-Caribbean managers to operate their holdings. At the southern pole, the Spanish actually discouraged large-scale sugar production through high taxes and monopolistic shipping practices because it competed with their own domestic sugar industries and diverted scarce labor resources from more appealing and immediately profitable economic activities such as mining and ranching (Batie 1976: 212). Spanish agriculture was more settler- and smallholder-based, could be practiced in more less disease-prone climatic regions than sugar, and if slaves were involved, they often worked alongside their owners or Euro-Caribbean and mestizo peasants (Mintz 1971: 486; Stinchcombe 1995: 8, 108, 132).

The French switched definitively from experimentation with a variety of crops such as tobacco and indigo to sugar after the English did so, with Martinique and Guadeloupe remaining sparsely populated and French colonial shipping levels ‘medio-
cre’ until the end of the 17th century (Batie 1976: 11; Butel 2000: 198–199; Chaudenson 2001: 102; Parkvall 2000: 157). The Dutch played an even more prominent role in the reorientation of French colonial production to sugar than they had in the case of the British (Batie 1976: 219–220). Not only were Dutch planters, merchants, and creditors an integral element in the initial forays into sugar cultivation on Martinique and Guadeloupe, but in France as well the Netherlanders dominated large portions of the processing and trade of colonial products, to the extent that the French bureau for colonial trade was first located in the Low Countries (Antwerp) rather than in France itself (Stinchcombe 1995: 73; Butel 2000: 196–197).

With the spectacular rise of sugar production in St. Domingue (Haïti) during the 18th century, French colonial trade began to outstrip that of Britain itself. But while Britain was attempting to extract itself from the web of monopolistic colonial mercantilism, minimizing the influence of outsiders over its economy, and focusing on using the transatlantic trade for the expansion of its own domestic industrial sector, French commerce remained based on the exploitation of privilege, colonial exclusivity (monopoly), dependence on others (especially the Low Countries and Germany), and the re-export of colonial produce to the North of Europe and the Levant, rather than industrial production (Butel 2000: 202–204).

Stinchcombe (1995) demonstrates how the involvement of first the Dutch, then the British, and then the French in sugar monoculture parallels the general corporate reorganization of colonial commerce at the northern end of the superstrate economic continua, which occurred first in the Netherlands toward the end of the 17th century, then in England in the early 18th century, and finally in France toward the middle of the 18th century (ibid.: 57–59). The gradual establishment of a complex network of contractual agreements governing privately owned and controlled corporate finance, insurance, and marketing networks for long distance shipping led to a decisive shift from a feudal mode of production to a mercantile capitalist one in the home ports of the colonial trade in Northwestern Europe. The Spanish, however, continued to “manage their colonial commerce in corporatist government convoys … insurance, inspection, route of travel, the conditions of commerce, and the like were strongly regulated by the central government” (ibid.: 59).

The long distance trading ship, with its gear, cargo, finance, and insurance in the hands of several different private shareholder companies and with its closely supervised crew members expected to work eighty-two hours per week for a wage with maximum care and cooperation with co-workers to ensure mutual survival against rough seas and hostile attacks, is seen by many as the prototype for the organization of production under later stages of capitalism, such as the industrial factory (Linebaugh 1992) and the sugar plantation itself:

The origin of capitalism, in the sense of extraction of surplus value from free labor by finance capital through corporate or ‘bureaucratic’ supervision of that labor, was first found in port cities and on the high seas….Capitalism was first a world
system, and only later penetrated national economies....Plantations were also ‘bourgeois’ or ‘capitalist’ institutions, oriented to production in a market, involving investment of other people’s money, but they did not employ much proletarian wage labor (Stinchcombe 1995: 58).

Craton (1998: 155) cites a number of studies that characterize sugar plantation slaves as part-proletarian or proto-proletarian, especially in relation to their ability to organize themselves to improve their conditions and defend these gains over hundreds of years. He also traces the origin of the plantation work gang to the organization of ships’ crews (1997: 53–54). Some of the smaller islands of the Caribbean, like long distance trading ships, provided the colonial powers with near ideal experimental conditions for amassing a body of knowledge and experience about the extraction of maximum value from human labor in general, from both the visible and invisible work performed by women in particular (but also men), as well as from nature and the land (Mintz 1971: 483; Moitt 2000).

4.2 Superstrate ideologies, cultures, and linguistics

After the very initial stages of the colonial period, two clear conceptions of colonization emerged for the dominant classes. For the British, colonization was chiefly a capitalist economic enterprise, while for the Spanish colonization was not only about accumulating wealth, but also about a mission to integrate the peoples whom they conquered into Spanish and Catholic ‘civilization’. The differences between the Northern and Southern poles of the ideological and cultural continua created by the European and Euro-Caribbean ruling classes are often related to the Protestant-Catholic divide among them. In this scenario, the Spanish with their integrationist feudal ideology of ‘civilization’ fall squarely on the Catholic side, the Dutch and the British with their segregationist capitalist ideology of wealth as a blessing of God upon an divinely designated elect/elite group fall clearly on the Protestant side, while the French (with a largely Catholic ruling class and a largely Protestant commercial class) and the Portuguese (with a largely Catholic ruling class and a largely Jewish commercial class) fall somewhere in between (see, for example Goveia 2000 and Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985).

All of the principal European transatlantic powers underwent major religious upheavals at the beginning of their colonial endeavors. The Christian Reconquista of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims immediately preceded the first Portuguese voyages to Africa and the first Spanish voyages to the Caribbean, while the initial period of both Portuguese and Spanish colonialism coincided with the Inquisición, which resulted in the nearly complete ethno-religious ‘cleansing’ of those two countries by the beginning of the 17th century. In many ways, the ‘civilizing’ ideology of the Reconquista and Inquisición came to define the Spanish colonial project, in which the state forged an intimate alliance with the church designed to spread the Spanish language, Spanish culture, and the Catholic faith to all of the inhabitants of the empire. In this
alliance the priests played a particularly influential part in determining the policy of an increasingly centralizing and interventionist bureaucracy (Mörner 1967: 35, 47–48).

The Protestant Dutch fought a bitter war against their Catholic rulers in Spain which not only led to the independence of the northern Netherlands in 1581, but shaped the entire initial period of Dutch colonialism as a militaristic, patriotic, Protestant, and proto-capitalistic ‘crusade’ against the Catholic kings. During the first half of the 17th century, the Dutch consistently put their financial resources, trading networks, and commercial and militarily expertise at the disposition of their British and the French allies in order to counter their Spanish and Portuguese enemies. By the end of the 17th century, however, first the British and then the French had so effectively mastered and perfected Dutch-style mercantile and agro-industrial capitalism, that the Netherlands were thereafter forced into a subsidiary position in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the ground-breaking role played by the Dutch in the worldwide transition to capitalism left an indelible mark on Northern cultures, with such key institutions as the nuclear family and bourgeois ‘home’ first consolidated on a society-wide basis in the Netherlands before spreading to the rest of northern Europe (Rybczynski 1986: 52–54).

In Britain, the struggle between the feudal-leaning Anglican Stuart monarchy and the capitalist Puritans framed the establishment of the first English transatlantic colonies, all of which failed or were on the brink of failure until the Civil Wars brought the Puritan Cromwell to power. Cromwell and his successors from the Dutch House of Orange succeeded in making the transition to capitalism inevitable in Britain, in no small measure by reshaping the country’s colonial policy in the image of that of the Netherlands. In contrast to the Spanish, the Dutch and the British showed little interest in spreading their language, culture, and religion to the people they colonized, especially in the initial period of transatlantic expansion (Craton 1997: 154). In general, intimate and frequent interaction between Euro-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean populations was much more limited in the British and Dutch colonies than in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, with the French (especially during the initial period of colonization) once again situating themselves somewhere between the Northern and Southern poles of this continuum.

France’s first transatlantic voyages came at a time when that country was engulfed in a bloody confrontation between Catholics and Protestant Huguenots. Although the Huguenots led the initial French efforts to challenge the supremacy of Spain in the Americas, none succeeded until the Huguenots were politically defeated and peace was made with the Spanish at the end of the 16th century (Craton 1997: 37). The French Protestants, however, could be said to have lost the religious battle but to have won the war between feudalism and emergent capitalism, and thereby continued to play a leading and often predominant part in colonial commerce. The French were ambivalent, if not schizophrenic, in their conceptualization of their colonial mission. While the Protestant commercial class showed little or no interest in the spread of French language or culture, and were largely prohibited from either owning slaves or from carrying out proselytizing activities in the colonies, the Catholic ruling class put some emphasis on the spread of
French ‘civilization’ and the conversion of all of their subjects, including the enslaved, to Catholicism (Goveia 2000: 590). It is no accident, then, that the first colonies to eventually be officially integrated into metropolitan political structures, with parliamentary representation were French: first St. Domingue for a brief period at the end of the 18th century and finally Martinique and Guadeloupe toward the end of the 19th.

Dominant attitudes toward race and slavery also differed significantly between the Southern and Northern colonial powers. In distinction to the Dutch and the British, the Spanish and Portuguese were no strangers to African people, civilizations, or slavery as they entered the colonial era (Oliver & Atmore 2001; Roberts 2004: 18). As an integral part of the Mediterranean Contact Zone, most of the Iberian peninsula had actually been ruled by Africans and could be said to have undergone more than five centuries of creolization with an African Islamic superstrate and a Catholic Romanic substrate, just prior to the first Portuguese and Spanish intercontinental voyages. Sugar plantations, worked first by Iberian and then by African slaves were an important part of the local economy before, during, and after the Reconquista.

Both the Spanish and the Portuguese carried to the Caribbean a set of ideologies and attitudes toward race and slavery that had characterized the Mediterranean world for millennia. Given the fact that the Mediterranean is an area in which Africa, Europe, and Asia meet, the rich variety of skin shades, facial features, body shapes, etc. found among its peoples make racial categorization a graded, flexible, and sometimes even imprecise process. Because most Mediterranean peoples had both enslaved other people and been enslaved by others under a plethora of pre-capitalist modes of production over the years leading up to the colonial period, often their ideas about slavery were not bound to a particular mode of production, a particular ‘level’ of civilization/humanity, or a particular race of people.

For the Dutch, British, and perhaps a lesser degree the French, African people, civilizations, and slavery were relatively unknown until the advent of colonial plantation slavery, especially in its most capitalistic form adapted to the production of sugar. Capitalist sugar production in the Caribbean as developed by the Dutch and subsequently perfected by the British and French required a type of slavery which was unprecedented in history in terms of its rigidity, lack of possibility of manumission, association with a particular ‘level’ of civilization/humanity, and dependence on a binary, inflexible, and precise determination of race. Because sugar cultivation and the trading activities that supported it eventually became the dominant economic paradigm in the Dutch, British, and French Caribbean, the concepts of race and slavery necessitated by capitalist sugar production predominated in the regimes that they imposed.

Particularly during the initial years of colonization, many more European males than females migrated to the Caribbean. The sex ratio was particularly skewed in this direction among the Spanish and Portuguese, as well as for a briefer period among the French (Chaudenson 2001: 99, 102). While children of European or Euro-Caribbean fathers and African or Afro-Caribbean mothers appeared everywhere in the Caribbean, under the British and French regimes, these children were usually not recog-
nized by their fathers and were considered to be Black and eligible to be enslaved. In the Spanish Caribbean, however, things were very different. The majority of the non-indigenous population of all of the Spanish islands was of mixed European, Indian, and/or African blood from the first Creole generation onward (Stinchcombe 1995: 169). Children of European or Euro-Caribbean fathers and non-European mothers were normally claimed by their fathers and raised practicing their father’s culture and religion as well as speaking their father’s language. Neither a binary Black/White nor even a ternary Black/Colored/White distinction could handle such a situation. Instead both de jure and de facto racial categorization was much more nuanced, with people being classified into dozens of imprecisely defined castas, whose legal and social boundaries were fluid to the point that one could purchase cedulas de gracias a sacar in order to remove oneself from one racial category and become an ‘honorable’ (but still sometimes vulnerable) member of another (Mörner 1967: 45).

Besides marriage and birth to a European or Euro-Caribbean father, there were many more avenues open to slaves to obtain a greater degree of freedom in the Spanish and Portuguese Caribbean than in the sugar colonies of the Dutch, the British, and to a slightly lesser extent, the French. Rates of manumission indicate that the French (even in St. Domingue) were more likely than the English to free their slaves (Mintz 1971: 481; Pérez 1988: 63–64; Stinchcombe 1995: 95, 116). In fact, giving attention to the varying nature and frequency of processes through which the enslaved gained freedom may do more to explain the widely recognized differences in race relations across the Caribbean than do narrow assertions about the character of slavery in each case of European colonization.

4.3 Superstrate politics

Two very distinct legal frameworks help define the two poles of the political continua created by the European and Euro-Caribbean ruling classes: the feudal laws of the Southern European monarchies which prevailed in the Spanish Caribbean and the bourgeois civil law of the northern European port cities which held sway first in the Dutch and then in the British territories, with significant elements of British colonial law and law enforcement mechanisms modeled directly on those of the Netherlands (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000: 33). Commenting on this Northern model of governance and its proto-capitalist precedents in Italy and Catalonia during the late Middle Ages, Stinchcombe (1995: 85) observes:

The early colonies of the Netherlands, France, and England were...governed dominantly by ‘civil law’ basically the law of the port cities. Civil law is distinguished from criminal and administrative law mainly by providing state power to force compliance with contracts voluntarily entered into.... It was contracts, together with the organization of corporations...that constituted the central government forms of early colonies....Colonies in their very first beginnings had
colonial companies, the law of the Spanish colonies was designed to secure the interests of the colonial masters and their agents, who were not only Spanish, but also Creoles and people of mixed Spanish and African ancestry. The law was thus a tool of social control, a means of maintaining order and stability in the colonies. It was also a means of protecting the interests of the colonial powers, both Spanish and French, in the region. The law was designed to ensure that the colonies were productive and profitable, and that the profits were directed back to the European homeland. It was also designed to ensure that the colonies were stable and secure, and that the local population was docile and obedient.

Colonial rule in the Spanish Caribbean was highly centralized and tightly controlled by the monarchy through an urban-based bureaucracy. The Spanish established well-planned cities in their Caribbean territories, with all of the infrastructure needed to project metropolitan power, including impressive buildings to house government officials and their staffs; military installations (barracks, armories, etc.), and centers for the propagation of ideology such as cathedrals and universities. British colonial administration in most of its Caribbean colonies was decentralized, with assemblies of local planters enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy from the metropole in matters of local governance. Rule under the British was generally plantation-focused and governmental infrastructure was the minimum necessary to ensure a profitable return for investors.

Politics in the British Caribbean was that typical of Slave Colonies and therefore was defined on the whole by the relationship between planters and their slaves, whereas in the Spanish Caribbean the key political relationship was that typical of Settler Colonies and therefore was defined by the relationship between the metropolitan administration and the locally born Creole elites (most of whom were not sugar planters before the 19th century). Wishing to avoid the commercial failure of the Spanish colonial model, the French attempted to replicate the plantocratic system practiced by the British, to the extent allowed by the extremely centralized nature of French governance (Mintz 1971: 487; Stinchcombe 1995: 74; Craton 1997). While laws were made by local councils and assemblies in the British Caribbean, the laws in the French territories were made by the French monarchy and its officials as well as by local councils (Goveia 2000: 589).

The degree to which sugar plantation slavery dominated the economy and politics of each colonial regime is reflected in the laws put into place under each metropolitan power to regulate slavery as an institution. Up until the end of the 18th century, slavery in the Spanish Caribbean was governed according to the general principles laid down in the 13th century Siete Partidas, the legal code which formed the framework for common law in the Spanish colonies. Under Spanish law, slaves were guaranteed the right to marry, to the services of priests, and to buy themselves out of slavery (Stinchcombe 1995: 171). Because slavery never completely dominated the economies of the Spanish Caribbean during this period, Goveia (2000: 581–583) states that:

the Spanish slave laws were less completely adapted to the will of the slave-owning ‘planter’ than was the case elsewhere [in the West Indies]....the principle of slave law was, on the whole, a principle friendly to the protection of the slave and to his claims for freedom. For the Partidas envisaged the slave as ‘a persona’ and not as ‘mere property’....In the Partidas slavery is undoubtedly accepted as legal. It is not accepted as good...[S]lavery is looked upon as a misfortune, from the conse-
quences of which slaves should be protected...because they are men [sic], and because man [sic] is a noble animal not meant for servitude....The truth is that this 'medieval' slave code was probably the most humane in its principles ever to be introduced in the West Indies....The relative despotism of the Spanish government acted as a check on the local oligarchies, which did not necessarily share the view of slavery expressed in the Siete Partidas.

Because the British sugar islands had become fully-fledged slave societies under local control of a conscious class of planters whose very existence depended on slavery (Stinchcombe 1995: 53), Goveia (2000: 583–585) asserts that the planter-designed slave laws that held sway in the British Caribbean:

left the power of the master over his [sic] property, the slave, virtually unlimited....The basic conception of the English law in relation to the slave was not, as with the Spaniards, that he [sic] was an inferior kind of subject. It was rather that he [sic] was a special kind of property....[P]rotective enactments were relatively few and sometimes rather ambiguous. Police regulations occupied the most ample proportion of the attention of British West India legislators. In the...British slave laws...the dominant tendency was to recognize the slave as 'a persona' in a sphere far more limited than that allowed him [sic] in either the Spanish or French slave law. English slave law almost totally neglects the slave as a subject for religious instruction, as a member of a family, or as a member of society, possessing some rights, however inferior. Insofar as the slave is allowed personality before the law, he [sic] is regarded chiefly, almost solely, as a potential criminal.

The Code Noir, which was formulated in 1685 to regulate slavery in the French Caribbean, was similar to the Spanish Siete Partidas in that it was a compilation of laws that was imposed fairly uniformly on all colonies by a centralized metropolitan administration. But the Code Noir was in many respects much closer to the British slave laws than to the Siete Partidas in its actual purpose and intent. In this connection, Goveia (2000: 588–591) states that:

The Code Noir bears some resemblance to the Siete Partidas because they both were influenced to some extent, by the concepts of Roman and canon law. Nevertheless, it more fundamentally resembles the slave laws of the British West Indies by reason of its intention and function....[B]efore the Code Noir was instituted, the French colonies already possessed a fairly comprehensive series of slave laws, and...the Code Noir really may be regarded as an extended codification of these laws....Some of these laws were made by [royal] officials and some by the [local] Council; and perhaps it is significant that the Council appears to have concerned itself mainly with police laws. It is notable, however, that the Council, as a court, heard cases arising from the cruelty of masters and...had made judgments punishing cruelty. This point is probably significant of a contrast in attitudes in the British and French islands arising from a contrast in their political traditions.
In British law, the tendency was to limit the sphere of the influence of the crown, and to foster, in particular, a respect for the rights of private property. In France and its colonies, because the power of the crown was less limited, the sphere of interference, even with private property, was commonly accepted to be much wider. The slave, by being private property, did not cease to be in his [sic] person a matter of public concern, and public interference in the management of slaves was more taken for granted at this stage in the French West Indies than it was in the British islands at the same time. [. . .] The Code Noir was... based on a wider conception of the slave as a 'person' and on a different conception of public order [than in the British slave laws]...[Slaves] were to be baptized and instructed as Catholics and their overseers could be of no other religious persuasion. They were to observe Sundays and the holidays of the church, to be married, and if baptized, buried on holy ground...[A slave was] allowed to make complaints to the...attorney general [who] was thus given a status as protector of the slaves...Manumissions were made easy for all masters who had attained their legal majority.

The Code Noir also fixed minimum allowances of food and clothing for slaves and prohibited concubinage between masters and slaves. Stinchcombe (1995: 141) echoes Goveia's assessment, ranking the British as the least likely and the Spanish as the most likely to treat their Caribbean slaves as they treated free people, with the French somewhere in between these two poles. But, significantly, he also points out that under the Spanish, 'free' people often were subjected to forms of coerced labor (ibid.: 100). In any case, with the success of capitalist agro-industrial sugar production in the French Caribbean in the 18th century and in the Spanish Caribbean in the 19th, the Code Noir and the Siete Partidas, as well as the ideologies surrounding their formulation and interpretation, gradually lost ground in favor of much more repressive legislation and practice (Goveia 2000: 583, 591).

4.4 Substrate economies

Most of the Africans taken to the Caribbean as slaves from 1500 to 1800 would have come from communities along the West African coast and its hinterland. While we recognize that tendencies to idealize and romanticize subsistence economies are to be avoided at all costs, we cannot ignore that inalienable land tenure, alongside a very successful complex of economic activities including agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, food processing, trading, metalworking, and a host of other crafts and manufacturing pursuits had guaranteed West Africans a life of relative abundance for thousands of years (Nzewunwa 1980; Farclas 2005). Despite the inequalities that existed in a number of the many different social configurations found in the region, it would be difficult to deny that the food-, housing-, land-, employment-, and social-security generally enjoyed by the peoples along the coast of West Africa contrasted sharply with the plight of the majority of the inhabitants of Western Europe
at this time, most of whose autochthonous power over land had been gradually lost since the time of the Roman Empire (Carney 2001).

As Britain was establishing its colonial empire, even the few rights that the bulk of its rural population had managed to retain over land during the feudal period were being systematically extinguished through the Enclosures of Common and Estate lands, which caused a massive displacement of dispossessed peasants to the cities. British cities were growing far more quickly than the employment opportunities that they generated and when work was available in urban centers, the pay was usually not sufficient to meet basic survival needs. This resulted in a rapidly expanding number of marginalized town dwellers, forced to engage in a myriad of semi-legal and illegal activities, just to stay alive (Linebaugh 1992).

What was happening to the working people of Africa and the Caribbean was inextricably bound to what was happening to their European counterparts. Sugar plantation slavery and the transatlantic trade that it gave rise to had made it more profitable for the British landowning class to produce sheep for the manufacture of cloth for the colonies than to continue to employ peasants to produce food. Many of the peasants who were uprooted in this process eventually ended up as the transported convicts, indentured laborers, privateers, etc. who became the 'shock troops' for the British transatlantic colonial enterprise, which in turn allowed the further expansion of plantation slavery in the British Caribbean. In many ways, this was a period of unprecedented experimentation in just how much labor and profit could be extracted from human beings while minimalizing the costs of their maintenance and reproduction (Mintz 1971: 483–485), with the techniques for labor extraction developed on the agro-industrial plantations of the Caribbean being almost immediately deployed in the burgeoning industrial manufacturing sector in Britain.

In Spain, feudalism remained largely intact until the end of the 18th century, with the rural population subjected to many different types of forced labor by the landowning classes. While relatively few Northern Europeans emigrated to the Caribbean with the intention of becoming peasants, most of those who arrived in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Cuba from Spain wanted land upon which they could establish an independent subsistence economy; but when they arrived, they were once again subject to forced labor (Batie 1976: 210; Stinchcombe 1995: 104, 108). The Spanish monarchy actually attempted to limit African slavery in its transatlantic territories during the first centuries of colonization, preferring to mobilize its own peasantry as well as the considerable numbers of people who had been displaced by the Reconquista and Inquisición to relieve shortages of exploitable labor in the colonies and using Amerindian slaves when these sources, like many of their counterparts in the Caribbean, proved inadequate (Mörner 1967: 15–16; Govea 2000: 591).

The main defining feature of the substrate economic continua as they are conceptualized here is the deep attachment of the African and Afro-Caribbean populations in the Antilles to a community-based subsistence economy and their desire to re-establish that economy in the Caribbean. The poles of these continua are defined by the
encounter of West African subsistence producers with agro-industrial capitalism and an uprooted European working class whose relationship to land and subsistence had been severely disrupted at the Northern pole, and the encounter of West African producers with a mass of European and mestizo peasants and indigenous peoples who shared their desire to establish or re-establish a subsistence economy in the Caribbean at the Southern pole. Successful waves of forced migration from Africa to the Caribbean would have continually reinforced and enriched the tradition of subsistence economics among Afro-Caribbean populations.

The great majority of the enslaved African and Afro-Caribbean population of the British Antilles was incorporated into the gangs of field/mill workers on large sugar plantations, where many were completely alienated from the land they worked, the labor they performed, and the fruits of their labors: the antithesis of subsistence (Stinchcombe 1995: 149; Moitt 2000: 1019–1029). But even in this situation, slaves ceaselessly struggled for the establishment of their own subsistence economies on the margins and in the interstices of the dominant agro-industrial sugar complex. Despite the resistance of planters, slaves won the right to cultivate their own subsistence plots, to consume and sell the produce of their plots, to organize their own weekend markets, and to conduct a number of other subsistence activities.

Even though the spectacular success of sugar in the Antilles can be understood as having depended almost entirely on African and Afro-Caribbean science, knowledge, expertise, and labor (Moitt 2000: 1018–1023; Chaudenson 2001: 119, 227, 248; Haviser ms), there is substantial evidence that slaves engaged much more enthusiastically in marginalized subsistence activities than in the cultivation and processing of cane. Although subsistence plots were typically located on marginal land, could only be worked by slaves in their extremely limited free time, and were expected to provide slaves with most of their dietary needs across colonial regimes, the surplus from these plots often became the main source of food for the entire population of a given sugar island, including all of the town dwellers and the planters themselves (Tomich 2000; Carney 2001: 1). Where Afro-Caribbean populations were to some extent left by the British to their own devices (as in Anguilla and other marginal colonies), where Maroons established their own sovereignty (as in the highlands of Jamaica), and where land was redistributed after emancipation (as in Tortola), slaves or former slaves quickly established relatively viable community-based subsistence economies.

Because capitalist agro-industrial plantation slavery constituted neither the basic foundation nor the main source of labor for the economies of the Spanish Caribbean until the 19th century, a great number of slaves there, if not the majority, could expect freedom within their lifetime by various means, including purchase, manumission, marriage, and maroonage (Pérez 1988: 64; Lipski 2005: 126–127). Manumission rates as well as the ratio of freed slaves to slaves were much higher in the Spanish Antilles than in the British Caribbean, with the numbers for the French territories falling somewhere in between these two extremes. African and Afro-Caribbean slaves came to constitute the
preponderant majority of the population of first the British and later the French Caribbean, but they never did so in the Spanish Antilles (Mintz 1971: 481–482).

Slaves in first the British and later the French colonies mainly worked on sugar plantations; in the Spanish colonies, however, most worked as domestics or craftspeople. This trend, together with the fact that plantation size was largest under the British, slightly smaller under the French, and significantly smaller under the Spanish, meant that the great majority of African and Afro-Caribbean slaves would have had little or very limited contact with non-slaves from a very early period in the English territories, slightly more contact early on but dramatically less as time went on in the French Antilles, and significantly more contact in the period before the turn of the 19th century in the Spanish Caribbean (Goveia 2000: 571).

The economics of subsistence in the extremely hostile environment of agro-industrial capitalism forced African and Afro-Caribbean peoples in the British Caribbean to forge strong bonds among themselves for mutual survival, yielding tightly-knit micro-economies and communities occupying exclusive niches in the margins of plantocratic society. In the Spanish Antilles, however, the African and Afro-Caribbean working classes found natural allies among their indigenous Caribbean, mestizo and European counterparts, populations which for a variety of reasons frequently shared their goal of the establishment of subsistence economies. This co-incidence of economic projects among all of the working classes in the Spanish Caribbean fostered the formation of colony-wide subsistence economies and subsistence communities, in which Africans and Afro-Caribbean peoples, with their extensive knowledge and mastery of tropical agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, architecture, metalworking, etc, would have played a significant role alongside indigenous Caribbean peoples (Carney 2001).

4.5 Substrate ideologies, cultures, and linguistics

West Africa is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse regions on the planet, with well over one thousand distinct but highly interactive ethno-linguistic communities, each practicing multiculturalism in its own creative and unpretentious way. This situation graphically exemplifies Bakhtin’s (1934) notion of heteroglossia, a term which he uses to describe the linguistic landscapes that have typified the overwhelming majority of human cultures for the greater part of human history, in stark contrast to relatively recent consolidation of languages of domination in places like Western Europe. The imposition of ‘unitary’ standardized languages began in earnest during the initial period of European expansion into the Americas and continues to this day, but, as Bakhtin observes, the centrifugal forces of heteroglossia continually frustrate the centripetal tendencies of hegemonic language and culture.

Cultural exchange, trade, and intermarriage between ethnic groups have always been the rule rather than the exception in West Africa (as they were in the indigenous Caribbean), so that each individual actor in society is expected to strike a dynamic balance between a strong sense of ethnic identity and a fluent command of many different
cultural, linguistic, and religious codes. It is this firm and secure sense of cultural identity often matched by both an acceptance, even a preference for inclusiveness, adaptability, and linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as an openness to heteroglossia, cultural exchange and hybridity which defines the cultural continua that the African and Afro-Caribbean working classes created in the Caribbean (for examples from Latin America see Urban 1991: 307).

As is generally the case with subsistence producers worldwide (including the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean and speakers of Creoles in other regions of the world) the philosophies and ideologies that characterize West African societies are by and large centered around consciousness of one's belonging to nature and society as holistic systems and on the establishment of harmonious relationships with and within these systems. Post-Platonic and especially post-Enlightenment European science relies on analytic reasoning with its emphasis on abstract formal logic, the conceptual dissection of reality into binary, unambiguous, independent categories and the belief that breaking down nature and society into component parts leads one to control them. In contrast, the sciences practiced by subsistence societies put a heavier emphasis on synthetic reasoning, experiential logic, the cultivation of ambiguity, relationships, and unity, and the idea that one's personal power depends on the dynamic alignment of oneself with nature and society (Bennholdt-Thomsen & Mies 1999; Von Werlhof 2001; Havisser ms). The ideological continua that the African and Afro-Caribbean working classes brought to the Antilles are defined by a conscious cultivation and celebration of the heterodox and heteroglossic blurring and dissolution of boundaries, enclosures, divisions, and categorical distinctions of all kinds, from those used to separate and exclude human beings to those that are used to demarcate one linguistic category from another. Such practices had a number of dimensions that were rational and strategic, as well as others that were mediated by the importance and value that speakers attributed to the imaginary, the artful, and the symbolic. This multidimensionality serves as a reminder that language is intimately connected to consciousness, “the work of making meanings in social life” (Woolard 1985: 742).

West Africans arrived in the Caribbean with a secure sense of identity that withstood all of the ravages of slavery and eventually thrived in its new environment. This sense of grounding and security in their own cultures and ideologies has historically given West Africans the confidence and openness to interact creatively and syncretically with cultures not their own, whether these other cultures are West African, indigenous Caribbean, or European, and whether contact with these other cultures occurs in their own village, in a regional market, in a slave trading fort along the West African coast, or on a plantation on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Successive waves of forced migration from Africa to the Caribbean continually reinforced and enriched these cultural traditions among Afro-Caribbean peoples.

Because neither African nor indigenous Caribbean peoples had undergone the processes of cultural and linguistic domination which culminated in the Enlightenment-inspired imposition of standardized ‘unitary’ constructions of European lan-
languages (Bakhtin 1934), their view of the nexus between language and power was fundamentally different from that of their European counterparts (especially those from northern Europe, particularly after the middle of the 17th century). Unitary notions about language and culture are closely related to Enlightenment concepts of knowledge. As noted by Briggs (1993: 403–404),

one of the fundamental tenets of modern science from the 17th century onwards has been that nature does not speak for itself – it can only be understood scientifically through the use of conceptual models devised by scientists. The powerful union of the rhetorics of authenticity, nationalism, nature, and preservation with the rhetoric of science was crucial here in that this hybrid rhetorical complex reserves, to scholars, textual authority over language, folklore, and the culture of Others.

In contrast, African and Afro-Caribbean peoples brought a decentered, heteroglossic sense of personal authority over language and of personal power through language into the Creole Space. Rather than viewing language and power as located ‘elsewhere’, that is, among the cultural and political elites (an attitude that would come to typify European and Euro-Caribbean peoples), Africans and Afro-Caribbean peoples retained their traditional sense of personal and community control over their languages and their lives, effectively undermining and in some cases toppling, dominant regimes of truth. As suggested by Woolard (1985: 741), the legitimacy of this alternative conceptualization of language and power is strengthened to the extent that a population that does not control a particular linguistic variety refuses to acknowledge and endorse its authority, its correctness, its power to convince, and its right to be obeyed.

This type of heteroglossia has transformed the Creole Space and the Creole languages which emerged from it, not merely into languages/acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985), but also into potent linguistic forces which have exerted and continue to exert considerable influence over the economic, political, and ideological parameter settings of the Creolization Matrix itself. Moreover, given that even an individual speaker exists as a site of differences, heteroglossia complicates the notion that a group or individual simply ‘has’ or ‘performs’ a specific identity. Linguistic identities are fluid formations constituted within webs of power relations (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Moore 1994). Ironically, when it is mentioned at all, many scholarly accounts of language genesis have tended to describe this tension and the alternative ways of speaking and belonging that it embodies as the result of nation-state formation or as a future problem which the nation-state should solve (e.g. through language standardization, ‘development’, or even ‘empowerment’). The reluctance to recognize cultural phenomena and social groupings that crosscut, undermine, hybridize, or exist outside dominant categories obscures the role that scholarship plays in creating, sustaining, and reproducing inequality based on race, language, gender, social class, and nationality.

The poles of the substrate ideological and cultural continua created by the African and Afro-Caribbean working classes are defined by the forging of a separate Afro-Caribbean identity and separate Afro-Caribbean communities in the face of racism and
apartheid at the northern end, and an aggressive and creative engagement with colony-wide society in order to transform it, not just to accommodate but also to embrace African and Afro-Caribbean culture, at the Southern end. Attention to these differences assists in reformulating theories of genesis so that they build not just on a few select points of articulation between select locales in Africa, the Caribbean, and/ or Europe, but also nuance ahistorical, homogenizing accounts which disregard the concrete ways in which language transformed and was transformed by political-economic, ideological, and social relationships.

The first Afro-Iberians and Africans to arrive in the Caribbean at the beginning of the 16th century were male, and they created intimate relationships and families with indigenous Caribbean women just as enthusiastically (if not more so) as their Euro-Iberian counterparts at the time. While women of African and indigenous Caribbean descent were systematically exploited and subjected to rape, concubinage, and other forms of violence, this fundamental and unabashed disregard by African and Afro-Caribbean peoples for distinctions between race and casta in the Spanish Caribbean has in many instances continued unabated up until the present day, despite considerable efforts made by the ruling classes to combat it (Mörner 1967: 40). African and Afro-Caribbean peoples together with their subsistence-oriented allies in the indigenous Caribbean, mestizo, and Euro-Caribbean working classes were so successful in this cultivation and celebration of difference in fraternity, love, and familial unity that ever since the earliest years of colonization, most of the Dominicans, and many of the Cubans and Puerto Ricans who themselves have no obvious phenotypical manifestations of West African ancestry can readily identify at least one member of their proximal extended family who does (Martínez Cruzado 2002).

The pervasive infusion of West African blood into the Spanish Caribbean is matched by an equally all-encompassing penetration of West African culture and values into nearly every sphere of Spanish Caribbean life, including but not restricted to religion, language, childrearing practices, interpersonal dynamics, architecture, literature, music, the visual arts, dance, cuisine, and attitudes toward work, play, and time. The universalizing and ‘civilizing’ mission of Spanish colonialism constituted the major constraint on the propagation of West African culture in the Spanish Antilles. This generally meant that, at least in the public sphere, West African cultural values, meanings, and expression had to be channeled through cultural forms or structures that could be accepted, appreciated, understood, and practiced by the entire Spanish world, such as Catholicism (Catholic ritual intertwined with Afro-Caribbean beliefs), the Spanish language (the Caribbean ‘dialects’ of Spanish), and Mediterranean cuisine (the simmering of pounded root crops or plantains in olive oil and garlic to make mofongo and mangú). This process was facilitated by considerable previous North and West African influence over Mediterranean culture in general and Iberian culture in particular under the Sahelian Moors and the close cohabitation between indigenous Caribbean, mestizo, Euro-Caribbean, and Afro-Caribbean populations in the Spanish Antilles. Indeed, the insistence on outward conformity to Spanish culture and ideology
probably encouraged the extremely widespread and incredibly inventive phenomenon of syncretistic subversion of European symbols by vigorous and resilient West African systems of discovering, understanding, and creating meaning in the world (Mazrui & Mazrui 1998; Mufwene 2001: 182–184).

In the British Caribbean, the situation was radically different. The cultural and ideological propensities of the African and Afro-Caribbean population toward unity, exchange, syncretism, inclusion, and the blurring of conceptual and social boundaries were systematically frustrated by the lack of meaningful and sustained contact between the Euro-Caribbean and the Afro-Caribbean populations, the absence of previous African influence on Northern European culture, the segregationist and exclusivist doctrine of Calvinistic Protestantism, the detailed definition and strict enforcement of racial divisions, and the alienated and dehumanized nature of capitalist labor extraction. The result was the diversion of these unifying tendencies from the colony-wide society to Afro-Caribbean communities themselves. Instead of the significantly more widespread syncretic fusion of West African cultures and values with European cultures and values that occurred in the Spanish Caribbean, a distinctive and self-conscious Afro-Caribbean cultural complex was forged from the West African ethnic mix found in the British territories.

In this way, two very different cultures emerged in the British colonies along the fault lines of slavery and race: firstly a Black culture that developed its own church, language, music, cuisine, and other expressive traditions from the synthetic fusion of a number of distinct West African traditions (all of which shared some areal and typological similarities) and secondly, a White culture that identified principally with the metropole (Mintz 1971: 487). Black culture emerged defensively as a positive valorization and affirmation of Afro-Caribbean identity within a system that sought consistently to negate it and offensively as a means of resistance to that system. Given the similarities between Spanish and French imperial enterprises in the earliest period of French colonialism, a certain degree of colony-wide syncretistic fusion between West African and French values and cultures must have occurred, but this trend was quickly and dramatically reversed as the French moved swiftly and decisively toward the agro-industrial production of sugar that formed the basis of the British colonial project in the Caribbean.

4.6 Substrate politics

When considering substrate politics, it should always be kept in mind that even though West Africa was the first part of the globe outside of Europe and the Mediterranean to be reached by the Portuguese navigators and merchants of the 15th century, its peoples successfully resisted colonization by the Europeans until the latter half of the 19th century. West Africans came into the transatlantic trading system with a considerable body of knowledge and with experiences of resistance to domination by the European colonial powers (Oliver & Atmore 2001).
As subsistence producers, West Africans’ social and cultural traditions supported ‘bottom-up’ community-based politics that deal with the identification, analysis, and resolution of community problems in a practical way, over the polemical, abstract politics that typify many European societies. Stemming from an equally complex West African epistemology, a ‘grassroots’ politics that emphasizes transforming ‘the facts on the ground’ characterizes the substrate political continua created by the African and Afro-Caribbean working classes in the Caribbean. Successive waves of forced migration from Africa to the Caribbean continually reinforced and enriched these political tendencies among Afro-Caribbean peoples. At the Southern pole of these continua we find African and Afro-Caribbean populations busy transforming and re-creating all aspects of colonial society in their own image. At the Northern pole, we find African and Afro-Caribbean peoples forging a common Afro-Caribbean identity politics with which to defend themselves in a more hostile system, assembling a diversified arsenal of creative and resourceful ways to offensively subvert and reshape that system, and creating their own autonomous micro-political spaces on the margins and in the interstices of that system.

It would be very difficult to find a more graphic and effective example of the concrete nature of a West African politics of ‘changing the facts on the ground’ than the rapid and complete subversion of all the founding racial and casta categories in the Spanish Caribbean through the demographic transformation effected by the defiant and energetic establishment of interracial sexual relationships and families by African and Afro-Caribbean peoples. Within a few generations, Spanish Antillean society became to a significant degree genetically and culturally West African, rendering all efforts to impose a British-type racialist regime totally ineffective, even after the implementation of the Northern-style Bourbon reforms designed to promote the growth of agro-industrial capitalism there during the 19th century and the importation of Euro-Iberians in a concerted effort to ‘whiten’ the Greater Antilles. Even peninsulares and lighter-skinned individuals who may have made use of a caste system to preserve their interests from intrusion by non-whites resented the ways in which it grew to systematically limit their aspirations and freedom (Chinea 2002: 172). The alliance for subsistence created between the Afro-Caribbean, indigenous Caribbean, mestizo, and Euro-Caribbean working classes was thus literally ‘incarnated’ in an eminently successful and irreversible way (Martinez Cruzado 2002). With this set of acts alone, the African and Afro-Caribbean peoples of the Spanish Caribbean moved beyond any politics of defensive or offensive opposition to the dominant system by dismantling the binary categorical opposition between ‘Black’ and ‘White’ upon which that entire system rested. While racism and racial hierarchy have not by any means been eradicated from the Spanish Antilles, these conditions put them permanently and decisively on the defensive.

This type of transformation and eventual progress toward transcending an oppressive system proved to be a much more complex and time-consuming endeavor in the British and French Caribbean. The African and Afro-Caribbean populations of the British territories had to adopt a politics of opposition within the binarisms that un-
derpinned the dominant system by both articulating a defensive identity politics and an offensive politics of resistance while simultaneously putting into practice a politics aimed at supplanting that system entirely. Identity politics ascribed a positive value to all aspects of Black culture, converting cultural forms such as Black language, Black music, Black religion, into signifiers of a distinct Black identity and intra-group solidarity. Resistance politics attached additional meaning to Black culture in opposition to White culture. In this way, the use of Black language became a vehicle for expressing one's rejection of White language and culture and at times an exclusive and secretive means for the African and Afro-Caribbean populations of the British territories to communicate with one another without being understood or spied upon by the White community. Because French colonialism, especially in its earliest stages, resembled the Spanish system more closely than that of the British in some fundamental ways, the tendency toward the development of identity politics was less pronounced in the French Antilles. For example, because all slaves in the French territories were expected to become practicing Catholics, a distinctive Black church never emerged there before the 19th century.

The African and Afro-Caribbean inhabitants of the British and French colonies resisted slavery in every manner imaginable, from deliberately slowing the pace of their day-to-day work all the way to organizing a sustained series of full-scale insurrections (Chaudenson 2001: 245). Whenever possible, however, a transformational subsistence politics of ‘changing the facts on the ground’ was practiced. Because of the comprehensive and all-sided nature of the repressive apparatus, first under the British and later under the French as well, this type of politics was only possible at the extreme margins of the system. But no margin or interstice was left unexploited by the slaves as a space from which a successful community-based ‘bottom-up’ politics of subsistence could be articulated and put into practice.

Provision plots and weekend markets became powerful venues for the redirection of African and Afro-Caribbean labor and ingenuity from the production of sugar to subsistence. These spaces were so successfully cultivated by slaves and the abundance that they produced was so dramatically different from the scarcity created by agro-industrial monocropping, that they became crucial for the survival of both the Black and the White communities and therefore could not be suppressed. They often thrived despite the fact that the weekend markets became lively venues for the expression and celebration of Black cultures and politics of identity, resistance, and transformation. Another case in point is female slaves’ refusal to bear children despite the severe punishments meted out to those who did so (Stinchcombe 1995: 34; Moitt 2000: 1020–1021). A significant number of African and Afro-Caribbean peoples were able to extricate themselves completely from the dominant system by running away into remote areas or to safe havens in the Spanish Antilles such as Puerto Rico’s San Mateo de Cangrejos (Chinea 2002: 175). In some cases, these slaves managed to create their own sovereign subsistence Maroon communities. Whatever their particular circumstances, however, the consistent political demands of African and Afro-Caribbean peoples re-
mained essentially the same; full emancipation and land, i.e. the two necessary and sufficient conditions for the creation of a community-based subsistence economy (Williams 1944: 202–205).

5 Conclusion: The linguistic outcomes

As suggested above, we propose that there is a strong correlation between political economy (i.e. the political, economic, and ideological framework within which power relations were manifested in each colony) and the extent and nature of influences from African substrate languages on the speech varieties that developed under colonialism in each Caribbean society. The theory of language/ cultural contact presented here predicts that the English-lexifier Creoles, the French-lexifier Creoles, and the Caribbean dialects of Spanish differ in the way in which substrate influences play themselves out in each case, in terms of the volume of substrate influence, the scope of that influence, and in terms of the historical dynamics of each speech variety. Furthermore, this framework can account for differences within any of the three groups. These differences, like exceptions that can be made to the more macroscopic generalizations made above, cannot be understood independently of the cultural reworkings brought on by the experience of dislocation; the constant reworking of speakers’ subjectivities and language ideologies in response to considerations of geography, class, gender, ethnicity, and race; and the interplay between control and regulation on the one hand, and resistance and resilience on the other.

When all the generally accepted and convincingly substantiated African substrate influences are considered (see Alleyne 1980; Farclas 1990; Parkvall 2000), the full range will appear in English-lexifier Creoles, whereas in the French-lexifier Creoles some of these features will be totally absent and others very marginal (highly marked). English-lexifier Saramaccan could be said to provide the base or measuring stick from which all the other Creole languages may be evaluated in terms of the number of African substrate features they contain. Phonologically, Saramaccan has co-articulated stops, pre-nasalised stops, nasal high vowels, all-pervasive vowel-final syllables, vowel harmony, and distinctive lexical tone. Morphologically, it has vestiges of a Niger-Congo noun class system and some functional morphemes taken from African languages. In syntax, Saramaccan has the full array of serial verb structures, reflexivization using a word meaning ‘body’ or ‘skin’, predicate clefting, postpositions, and reduplication to derive adjectives from verbs. In the area of lexico-semantics, Saramaccan has the largest number of African language cognates in its basic vocabulary as well as a significant number of calques.

Whereas African substrate features are clearly established in French-lexifier Creoles, no one of these languages will show a range comparable with Saramaccan, and, taken as a whole, these languages show fewer substrate features than the English-lexifier Creoles (Parkvall 2000: 155). For example, the only clear-cut phonological feature
attributable to the African substratum is the existence of nasal high vowels in Haitian. This feature occurs mainly in words of African language origin, but appears also in a few French-derived words. Even where a syntactic feature of African language origin occurs in French-lexifier Creoles, it may not exhibit the same range as in the English-lexifier Creoles. For example, French-lexifier Creoles have the dative/ benefactive, directional, purposive, and comparative serials; but not the instrumental and complementizer (‘say’) serials (except as highly marked structures of dubious authenticity). In addition, the lexical class Adjective is more common than in the English-lexifier Creoles. For example, whereas sik(i) ‘sick’ is generally used as a verb with the progressive aspect marker in English-lexifier Creoles, malad + Progressive Aspect is not grammatical in some French-lexifier Creoles and in those where it does occur (St. Lucian for example), some speakers reject it as ungrammatical (Alleyne 1996: 175–185).

The oldest layer of English-lexifier Creoles, best represented by Saramaccan, but also reconstructable for Sranan, Jamaican and others, has the largest volume of African substratum features, reflecting not only the fact that Saramaccan was cut off from contact with English at an early date but also the fact that the socioeconomic conditions of slavery from its inception favored such relatively heavy African influence. By contrast, the oldest layer of French-lexifier Creole varieties shows a form closer to French than later forms. This reflects the comparably favorable conditions for superstrate influence of the société d’habitation (Southern pole of the Creolization continua) typical of the initial period of French colonization. Later, when plantation slavery became firmly established and the number of enslaved Africans grew in the French colonies (moving them toward the Northern pole of the Creolization continua), African substratum features would have begun to proliferate, moving the languages further away from French and closer to West African languages. For example, Haitian shows signs of the initial development instrumental and complementizer serials, but these have yet to become firmly established in that language.

Some of the grammatical features that have been attested to varying degrees in the Caribbean dialects of Spanish which can be attributed to influence from African languages include the following (Otheguy 1974; Lipski 2005):

1. Use of nominal and adjectival words without inflectional suffixes
2. Use of nominals without articles
3. Postposing of demonstratives
4. Use of third person pronouns which are invariant for gender
5. Frequent use of pronominal subjects
6. Use of verb roots without inflectional suffixes
7. Use of preverbal aspect and modality markers such as ta, ya, va
8. Fusion of copular forms ser and estar into composite form (e)sar
9. Use of equative, locational, and other types of clauses without copulas
10. Use of the generic preposition na/ ne
11. Certain case relationships are indicated without the use of prepositions
12. Use of subordinate clauses without complementizers
13. Double negation
14. Questions without inversion
15. The use of the adverb más used before negatives

While some of these features are restricted to Afro-Caribbean dialects, others are used by populations of all ethnic origins in the Spanish Caribbean. Differences among Iberian Creoles may stem, in part, from shifts in the West African populations that contributed to their formation (Ferraz 1979; Maurer 1987; Mufwene 1994).

A number of scholars have suggested that Caribbean Spanish has undergone processes of pidginization, creolization, or semi-creolization (Granda 1968, 1971; Otheguy 1974). Whatever names are given to the processes involved, the linguistic outcomes of these processes seem at least to some extent to be different in the Spanish Caribbean from those attested in the British Caribbean, with the French Caribbean falling somewhere between these two poles. Although it would be very difficult to try to derive the more substrate-influenced varieties of English-lexifier Caribbean Creoles from English, it seems to be slightly less difficult to derive the French-lexifier Caribbean Creoles from French and much, much easier to derive the African-influenced speech varieties that are spoken in most parts of the Caribbean from Spanish.

In this work, we have attempted not only to situate Creole languages within their economic, political, and ideological context, but we have also tried to articulate a view of creolization as a polycentric system that can include varieties of Caribbean Spanish. We recognize and point out that the main ideas presented above build on discursive tropes, each with a genealogy and a history of having been cast and recast in cultural and political terms (at times by speakers of the languages mentioned, but more often than not by linguists) that frustrate efforts to describe and analyze Creole languages on their own terms. Examples of such tropes include the highly problematic notions of ‘absence’ and ‘deletion’ (as found in the list above) which are commonly used to describe ‘deviant’ or ‘prototypical’ Creole language features in terms of deficiencies in relation to European-lexifier languages that result from some process of simplification.

As Mufwene explains, creolists’ reliance on such concepts contributes to a ‘pernicious’ tradition of downplaying the role of contact in the study of ‘native varieties’ and invoking it in the case of Creole and ‘indigenized’ varieties, leading to notions of ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ offspring of European varieties (2001: 107). The former, among which he would probably include arguments that Caribbean Spanish ‘is just a dialect’, are attributed to ‘normal evolution’. The latter, as discussed above, are defined as exceptional. Rather than being ‘innocent’ concepts that provide the currency for ‘neutral’ and/or ‘scientific’ discourse, these notions are implicated in acts of symbolic violence that give form and substance to the very identities, cultural practices, and languages that linguists seek to describe (Bourdieu 1991).

Keeping these reservations in mind, we hold that this configuration of ideas offers an open-ended yet empirical way of describing similarities and differences among the linguistic varieties that flourished in the Caribbean as result of the Atlantic Slave Trade,
helping to explain why languages that emerged from British sugar slavery in the Caribbean are generally considered by linguists to be autonomous varieties, and not dialects of English at all. Those speech varieties that developed under French Caribbean sugar slavery, perhaps because they are in a sense ‘caught in the middle’, have become the subject of intense debate among linguists as to whether they should be classified as dialects of French or not. Finally, there are the African-influenced speech forms that emerged from Spanish colonialism in the Caribbean which are normally classified by linguists as dialects of Spanish (except for Palenquero, some of the language varieties associated with sugar slavery in the Spanish Antilles in the 19th century, and Papamentu, which could be considered to be a Portuguese-lexifier Creole that has been significantly relexified in the direction of Spanish). As we have suggested, for political and economic reasons Caribbean varieties of Spanish do not usually enter into dominant narratives of linguistic creolization per se, at least not in the anti-exceptionalist terms that demand a more extensive interrogation of context and reveal parallels and contrasts that both link them to and distinguish them from their English- and French-lexifier counterparts.

References


