

Psychology in the Public Interest

Migration and Intercultural Relations in the Caribbean Region

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Abstract

There is probably no more serious challenge to attaining social stability and cohesion in the contemporary world than the management of intercultural relations within culturally plural societies. These goals are important to achieve because they underpin mutual acceptance and trust across cultural groups. The successful attainment of these goals depends on many factors, including a research-based understanding of the historical, political, economic, religious and psychological features of the groups that are in contact. Currently, there are unprecedented numbers of individuals and groups who live outside their countries of origin, as refugees, immigrants. And migrant workers These new arrivals have added to the diverse populations who have already settled over previous generations in these societies. In the Caribbean Region, all these phenomena are underway, and need to be examined across the states and territories of the region. The core question we all face is "How shall we all live together?"

Migration has brought about the development of culturally-plural societies in the Caribbean region, raising issues of intercultural relations, both within and between Caribbean societies and peoples (Levine, 1995). Furnivall (1939) defined a plural society as one that has a 'medley of peoples' within the society who interact but do not combine into one people. In all these plural societies, a major question is "How shall we all live together?" (Berry, 2003a). As noted by Hope-Thomas (2001, p.58):

Migration has become deeply embedded in the psyche of Caribbean peoples over the past century and a half. It has evolved as the main avenue for upward mobility through the accumulation of capital – financial and social. Thus the propensity for migration is high and there is a general responsiveness to the opportunities for moving whenever they occur. At times these opportunities have come from within the region itself or the wider circum-Caribbean region, as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; in more recent times from North America and Europe... The migration dynamic reflects the interplay of international, national and highly personal circumstances.