CHILDREN, RACE, AND INEQUALITY
The Colonial Legacy in Belize

NANCY LUNDGREN
Antioch University

An old Creole proverb says, "wen Black man teef, e teef some, wen bakra teef, e teef all," which means: when a Black man steals, he steals some; when a White man steals, he steals all. Anyone who is familiar with Belize knows that this proverb reveals truths about the history and people of this Central American country. The colonization process, if not the bakra himself, has been recognized by many scholars, including Magubane (1979), Memmi (1965), Nandy (1983), Nettleford (1979), and Fanon (1967), as having deprived people of their land, their labor, their resources, and their dignity. Although it has not always been demonstrated, colonization also threatens to rob them of one of their most critical resources, the next generation.

In this article, I argue that, although formal colonization does not exist in Belize today, it continues to function in the form of a complex and multilevel socialization process, which serves to reinfroce and perpetuate colonial and neocolonial unequal relations of power and an ideology of European superiority. The ethnic identity that accrues to children in this situation creates the conditions for the reproduction of a world stratified according to political, economic, and social power, a world in which invidious distinctions between groups of people, based on such personal attributes as gender, skin color, or class, influence access to critical, life-sustaining resources.

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The argument considers, along with Berreman (1981, p. 5), that this form of stratification is humanly harmful, unjust, and dangerous and that "inequality between peoples and nations is a major threat to societal and even human survival."

CAVEAT: STRUCTURE AND HUMAN AGENCY

In recent years, scholarly attention has been focused on the conceptualization of individuals as free agents, creating their own realities and controlling their own lives, in order to balance what some have considered to be overly mechanistic models that privilege structure over human agency. One of the most eminent proponents of this position is Anthony Giddens (1976), whose recent work in sociology emphasizes the production and reproduction of social structure through the medium of active reflexive human agents:

> While not made by any single person, society is created and recreated afresh, if not *ex nihilo*, by the participants in every social encounter. The production of society is a skilled performance, sustained and "made to happen" by human beings. (p. 15)

Giddens presents this emphasis on what he calls "structuration" analysis in an effort to redress the extreme logic of what is often depicted as materialist determinism. Similar efforts have been made on the heels of later critical theory to move the bias even further away from materialist structural models and toward analyses that stress the role of subjective meaning and symbol manipulation. This latter emphasis has also included, either implicitly or emphatically, as is the case with Geertz (1973), Leach (1984), and other interpretive anthropologists, a rejection of positive science as a way of knowing altogether (O'Meara, 1989).

Although a critical view of both materialist theory and its positive epistemology provides a useful corrective to grand-scale macrotheories that may ignore the contributions of groups and individuals as they participate in the "production of society," the criticism be-

comes apologetic once it wanders too far from an observable, empirical world. If taken too seriously, this trend runs the risk of representing what Eric Wolf (quoted in Friedman, 1987) recently called a kind of intellectual retreatism, corresponding to a political retreatism in the world in general. This trend is also lamented by Ross (1980), who said that during periods of particular social upheaval, intellectuals withdraw into a kind of metaphysics and a view of culture which removes it from historical and material realities and places it in the realm of individual subjective interpretation.

I am firmly convinced that Ross is correct in suggesting that this is a dangerous trend, in that it obviates the need to question the relationship between the individual and her/his relationship to the political/economic structure of the world. It is a particularly ahistorical and asociological perspective, which distorts the truth of people's lives. Belizeans are free to create their own reality and to make meaning of their everyday lives, but they are not free to make it any way they wish. Meaning is created out of a real social, political, and historical context, which is created for, not by, individuals and which limits and constrains human potential. To confront racism and the reproduction of inequality means to confront the exigencies of the material world. Flight into realms of abstraction can only lead to intellectual impotence and practical retreat.

In this article, I contribute an analysis of the macrolevel, neocolonial processes that provide the cultural context within which individual Belizeans construct cultural meaning. I provide links between what has been conceptualized as the world capitalist system and the means by which groups and individuals in specific places, at specific points in time, interpret the demands of that larger system and translate the broader agenda into their own. This provides a more holistic and interdisciplinary theoretical contribution to the broader issues of race and inequality recognized as crucial by scholars recently (Magubane, 1984; Turner, 1984).

The following discussion is not an effort to take away from the strength, resiliency, agency, and pride of Belizean individuals and groups, but rather to contribute to a broader understanding of the historical, political, and economic realities of the Black experience in the world.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The need for a broader and more flexible approach to an understanding of socialization and child development issues has been recognized recently by scholars who have adopted what is referred to as an ecological or systems approach (McAdoo, 1981; McAdoo & McAdoo, 1985; Sinha, 1982). This trend in part results from the realization that earlier socialization models were inadequate to understand the special problems of families who are required to socialize their children into a world in which they have minority status and limited participation.

Earlier African American scholarship has long been concerned with the ethnic identity of African American children. Work pioneered by Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1958) and continued by Goodman (1965) concluded that children develop a sense of "race awareness" at a very early age. Later research on the African American child, especially through the 1960s and 1970s, focused on the comparative "deficit" (Peters, 1981). When African American children were first considered as a group in need of special study, the most salient issues—the children's poverty and the "deprived" family environment—immediately became the focus of this type of research (Moynihan, 1969; Rainwater, 1970). Valentine (1968) referred to this form of analysis as the "pejorative tradition," what Herskovits (1941) called economic determinism. Critiques of this position have followed in the work of Leacock (1971), Blauner (1970), and, to some extent, Szwed (1974) and Mintz (1974).

West Indian scholars have added a cross-cultural dimension to this discussion, focusing most frequently upon the family. Such work includes that of Henriques (1953), Slater (1977), R. T. Smith (1978), and M. G. Smith (1962). Judith Blake (1961) and Edith Clarke (1957) are most explicit about child-rearing strategies, though neither of them deals specifically with this topic. The two most extensive pieces of scholarship about the family in Belize have been concerned with issues of domestic organization among the Black Carib (Gonzalez 1969, 1984; Kerns, 1983). Sanford (1974) discusses child-lending in Belize, a well-documented family pattern in both Africa and the West Indies.

More recently Boykin and Toms (1985, p. 33) suggest that a new framework is necessary for understanding African American children and families, one recognizing the "multiplicity of socialization agendas" that must be negotiated simultaneously by this population. They go on to say that the complexity of Black child socialization is overwhelming and to date has not been adequately understood. Most studies on Black children and their families have been overly simplistic and usually pejorative, not considering the unique situation of Black parents trying to socialize their children as competent adults in a social system that "espouses both democratic equality for all citizens and caste-like status for its Black citizens" (Peters, 1981, p. 211).

Spencer (1985, p. 89) elaborates on this theme by suggesting an "incongruity of fit" between societal values at the macrosystem level and those experienced by minority children. This includes images the child gets from movies, magazines, religion, and the more formal aspects of the educational system. These images create an environment which, according to McAdoo (1985, p. 9), hinders the development of African American children. It is an environment that needs to be explored in all of its complexity in order to evaluate the socialization experience of such children.

RESEARCH THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Recognizing these problems in the understanding of African American children, I employed a broader, more integrated ecological or political-economic framework in exploring the socialization process in Belize and the children's development of a social self-identity. This is an effort to contribute to a more complex evaluation of African American child socialization, the African American family, the formation of ethnic identity in Belize and, ultimately, the reproduction of relations of inequality.

The macrosetting, or environmental context within which socialization of children in Belize takes place, has to be understood in the context of British empire building and the resultant incorporation of Belize into the world political economy. Clegern (1967) says that

the very form of Belize "was shaped to the convenience of empire" (p. 3). This is a process articulated by Magubane (1976), who said that

> historical incorporation of distinct societies under capitalism proceeds by means of conquest, domination and enslavement of alien peoples, followed by the socioeconomic restructuring of the dominated society in order to install new forms of production or exploit former productive activities. The fundamental objective of this restructuring is to send the incorporated society into the expansionist world economy as part of its productive system. This is commonly followed by the diffusion of the colonizer's cultural tradition. (p. 169)

Ideology, as such scholars as Fanon (1963), Nandy (1983), and Rodney (1981) have recognized, is one of the most powerful means by which this process is facilitated. According to *Belize Today* (Ministry of Education, 1984), "people are taught or 'socialized' to believe that the system is 'natural,' unchangeable and good for all, and that everybody can be rich if they work hard enough, are smart enough or are lucky" (p. 76). This is consistent with Bourdieu's (1985) notion of ideology as the coercive dimension of society and culture, "the medium through which particular relations of domination become inscribed in the taken-for-granted sphere of the world" (p. 5). The process, Bourdieu goes on to say, is most effective when it remains "interred in habit" and thus there is no need for words. Principles embodied in this way are not even made conscious, are not in one's voluntary control because they are not even made explicit.

In this article, I present two examples from a larger corpus of material to demonstrate the ways in which ideology is conveyed through visual as well as verbal symbols, to contribute to the sense children in Belize get of themselves and their place in the world and to deprive them of the opportunity for development of their full human potential. During my fieldwork stay in 1984-1985, with its primary focus in Belize City, and during subsequent visits in 1987, 1988, and 1989, I collected data on the images and messages conveyed in the marketplace, the church, the home, the media, and

the schools, keeping in mind that such information is imparted both formally and informally, both covertly and overtly. Covert verbal and visual symbols often convey information that contradicts the overt, direct messages usually associated with more formal learning sectors such as the schools, creating the "incongruity of fit" discussed by Spencer (1985, p. 89). The covert messages in Belize include an ideology that simultaneously denies the Belizean reality as it provides a norm of Western, White, Christian life. As I was interested not only in the messages given but also the messages received, I spent many hours with the children, drawing and talking and telling stories, in an effort to understand their interpretation of their world.

During the course of my four different visits to Belize, I spent countless hours walking the streets of every neighborhood in Belize City. I have been through back alleys, along quiet streets, and up and down the main thoroughfares. I have visited churches of every denomination, schools, markets, hospitals, clinics. I have talked to the government and intellectual leaders of the country, to education officers, principals, teachers, preachers, and ministers of education. I have been to bazaars, festivals, fairs, christenings, weddings, graduations, funerals, and informal family gatherings. I spent extended periods of time in the homes of 17 families identified as subject families, but I participated with members of the family with whom I resided, with neighbors, and with innumerable families I met in the course of everyday life. I worked expressly with 45 identified children, who supplied me with drawings, stories, songs, games, and conversation. But I constantly interacted with children on the streets and in the churches, homes, and schools I visited. The following are but two examples of the kinds of messages I saw and heard in the context of these travels.

Before I present the examples, I provide a brief overview of the country. Human beings learn culture. They learn it through both formal and informal structures that impart important social information. If I want to know how a Belizean becomes a Belizean, I must look at the schools, the religious institutions, the media, public and private social systems, and the household. The following overview provides basic demographic information as well as the his-

torical and political context out of which the socialization institutions evolved and which today provides the environment from which Belizeans obtain cultural messages.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Belize is a country situated in the Caribbean basin, bordering on Mexico to its north, Guatemala to its west and Honduras to its south. It is a country of 145,353 people (Central Statistics Office, 1985), 39.7% of whom were classified in the 1985 census as Creole. The second largest group in the country is Mestizo, which totals 33.1%. Other identified groups are: Garifuna, 7.6%; Maya, 6.8%; Ketchi, 2.7%; White, 4.2%; East Indian, 2.1% and Chinese, 0.1%. It is a nation that is geographically Central American but culturally West Indian.

Its political/economic history is a common one for the Caribbean region. The economy was firmly tied into the world market between 1638 and 1670, when Belize was colonized by England and exploited for its log wood. There was never a true plantation economy, as in much of the West Indies, although African slaves were used from the time of settlement until their emancipation in 1838. At the time of emancipation, a boom in the mahogany market created a need for labor, which was dealt with by importing indentured labor and using coercive methods to keep freedmen dependent. In this way, according to Bolland and Shoman (1977), the class/color differentiation was not eradicated, it simply changed form in the struggle between exploiter and exploited (the Maya, Carib, and Arawak Indians had already been dispossessed of their land or pushed into the interior, where they were sometimes able to cultivate a limited area).

As a consequence, the distribution of freehold land in Belize was such that the vast majority of the population was completely dispossessed. Much land was left idle by big landowners, which meant that the population could not grow its own food and thus remained, and continues to remain, dependent upon foreign imports.

Belize gained full formal independence from Great Britain in September 1981, left with an economy based on the export of sugar, citrus, and some fish products. These industries were, and continue to be, dominated by foreign investors, originally predominantly British but increasingly American (Hartshorn et al., 1984).

At the present time, 60% to 70% of the country's productive agricultural land is in the hands of foreign corporations, most of them absentees. Only 10% to 15% of the land suitable for agriculture is being used, exacerbating the problem of dependence upon foreign imports and investment (Bolland & Shoman, 1977; Hartshorn et al., 1984).

Belize has thus been left in a position much like other countries with similar histories. It includes a stagnant economy based upon foreign investment projects through grants and loans, foreign ownership of land and technology, dependence upon a fluctuating world market, and the underdevelopment of local resources (Bolland, 1986; Hartshorn et al., 1984).

A large percentage of the population gravitates to Belize City, the largest city in Belize, which is characterized by high under- and unemployment, low wages, and crowded living conditions. In Belize City, with a population of 39,771, most of the labor force is considered unskilled. About 50% of the administrative/managerial and professional/technical positions are held by foreign-born persons (Central Bank of Belize, 1984; Central Statistics Office, 1985; Hartshorn et al., 1984).

Missionaries from both England and the United States accompanied the earliest settlers, establishing schools. Over the years the government has established a partnership with the religious denominations so that, with a handful of exceptions, all of the schools in Belize are denominationally affiliated. Although the curriculum is developed by a local committee, the British system of grading and exams is followed. Educational materials, including textbooks, have traditionally come from England or the United States, which means that the illustrations, problems, and stories pertain to a reality that is not Belizean or even West Indian. Despite an ongoing effort to incorporate West Indian materials into the curriculum whenever

TABLE 1

Demographic Profile

District	*Population*	*Ethnicity*	*Infant Mortality per 1000*	*(1984) Marriages*	*Religion (%)*	*Deaths per 1000*	*(1984) Prior Education (Enrollments)*	*(1984) Unemployment (%)*
Stann Creek	14,181	45.6 Garifuna 32.9 Creole 10.5 Mestizo	26.6	39	72.4 Catholic 10.6 Anglican 7.2 Methodist	4.5	3,372	23.7
Belize City	39,771	76.0 Creole 12.2 Mestizo 1.5 East Indian	22.5	N/A	43.7 Catholic 26.3 Anglican 12.0 Methodist	N/A	9,378	22.0
Toledo	11,762	31.5 Kekchi 25.4 Mayan 12.7 Garifuna	52.8	60	71.8 Catholic 7.9 Pentecostal 6.7 Other	5.1	3,468	17.9
Belize	50,801	75.1 Creole 13.1 Mestizo 4.8 Other	22.5	296	43.7 Catholic 12.0 Methodist 26.3 Anglican	7.3	12,120	16.1
Cayo	22,837	49.0 Mestizo 31.0 Creole 8.0 White	19.0	196	68.5 Catholic 8.8 Other 7.0 Mennonite	2.5	6,607	10.3
Orange Walk	22,870	64.5 Mestizo 13.5 White 6.8 Mayan	10.3	138	69.5 Catholic 14.6 Mennonite 9.1 Other	2.3	5,970	9.8
Corozal	22,902	58.4 Mestizo 16.9 Creole 13.8 Mayan	18.4	125	75.6 Catholic 8.5 Other 6.6 Seventh-Day Adventists	2.5	5,716	8.4
Total population	145,353	Urban - 75,152	Rural - 70,201					

(continued)

TABLE 1 Continued

District	*1980 Population Census (%)*				
	Cooking Fuel				*Use of Electricity*
	Gas	*Electric*	*Wood*	*Kerosene*	
Toledo	6.0	0.2	67.1	15.7	18.4 (74.2 light with kerosene)
Orange Walk	34.3	0.4	44.1	14.1	50.2
Corozal	31.3	0.4	44.0	19.8	51.3
Cayo	33.8	1.3	41.4	19.7	58.6
Stann Creek	17.0	0.7	37.2	38.5	41.5
Belize City	42.9	1.8	8.3	37.7	79.6

SOURCE: Central Statistics Office (1985).

possible, the major portion of the educational input comes with a colonial or neocolonial ideological bias.

This brief synopsis of background information on Belize provides a context for understanding the environment with which Belizeans must interact each day and the nature of the milieu out of which cultural information emerges. Although the picture is incomplete, it suggests the nature of the historically derived material realities that provide certain boundaries within which individuals move and think and make everyday choices.

BLOND-HAIRED DOLLS AND BLUE-EYED CHRISTS

What do the children learn? Where do they learn? What are the messages they receive as they interact daily with their environment? What do they think about these messages? These are the questions I asked as I observed and shared with the children in their homes, schools, churches, and community. Two examples of what I saw follow. I have changed names in order to protect people's privacy.

THE MARKETPLACE

Christmas is celebrated enthusiastically in Belize, and the most opulent array of merchandise is exhibited at this time. It is also at this time that one is most completely aware of the impact of the United States upon the culture of Belize as a result of its increased economic interest in the region. According to *Belize Today* (Ministry of Education, 1984, p. 48), the U.S. cultural influence has largely replaced that of Great Britain in the last century. When Britain controlled Belize, U.S. cultural and political involvement was less than it was in other parts of the region. Gradually, however, as the United States became more involved in the Belizean economy, the cultural influences grew. The United States "has long defined this entire region as its own 'backyard'. As its investment, trade, military and cultural activity increase in the region, the U.S.A. gains more opportunities for cultural domination." The same report quotes the

chairperson of the National Arts Council, who wrote in 1983: "The T.V. stations bombard us with U.S. news and views, comedy and advertisements. Our children request G.I. Joes and play Pacman."

The full impact of this form of cultural intrusion can only be realized by walking along the streets and through the shops of downtown Belize, where one is assaulted with a dazzling array of G.I. Joes, Batman toys, Tonka trucks, Levis, and blond-haired, blue-eyed dolls in all sizes and shapes. At Christmas time, I walked down the main street in the tropical heat as street vendors displayed peanuts or fruit or ladies lingerie in bicycle-powered carts or on the bare ground. "Jingle Bells" could be heard crackling loudly in the enclosed market filled with piles of plantain, oranges, plastic shopping bags, potatoes, chickens, and tomatoes. In the store windows, Christmas lights blinked around displays of the bright and shiny merchandise with bits of tinsel and tiny artificial silver and green Christmas trees.

As I entered the main department store, I was greeted by a life-size plastic Santa Claus, smiling and bobbing up and down with an outstretched hand. Traditional Euro-American carols and popular Christmas tunes filled the air. The aisles were neatly arranged with Corning Ware, Cannon towels and sheets, brightly packaged perfumes and bath oils, electric mixers, toasters and, in the back, shelves full of the ubiquitous U.S.-produced children's toys and books with the traditional European folk figures: Goldilocks and her bears, Jack with his beanstalk, Cinderella, and Snow White with her dwarfs.

Most of the children could not hope for a Pac Man or G.I. Joe, but they all wished for the colorful trucks and cars, toy tea sets and straw-haired dolls they saw in the store windows. At a very early age girls express a desire for a "dollie." If the parents can afford it, they will provide the dollie for their daughter. As a symbol of things beautiful, the doll often remains in its original cellophane wrapping and is placed on a shelf or table to be admired throughout the year.

Earlene's father gave her a tall, stiff, plastic doll with straight bright yellow hair and big painted blue eyes. It stayed in its clear plastic bag and was only brought out to show when people like myself visited. In the several months following that Christmas, I

never saw the doll again. It had been put away somewhere out of the 5-year-old's destructive reach.

Charlotte had received such dolls for two Christmases; they were displayed in their fair-haired, pink-cheeked beauty upon a shelf in the family living room, still encased in their cellophane-covered boxes. A brightly painted child's tea set from the previous Christmas was also prominently displayed in this house. Charlotte's mother told me that she did not allow the 6-year-old child to play with these toys, as she was afraid they would become dirty or damaged through handling and would no longer be so pretty.

The effects of this aspect of colonialism on the rearing of children, specifically with respect to their sense of themselves in the world, seems obvious. Because the items are imported and expensive, they are difficult to obtain. As with anything rare, the item then takes on a special importance. Thus, when children get a toy, they are told that if they play with it, it will become "spoiled." This is especially true in the case of dolls. The doll is usually white and soft, with golden hair and blue eyes. It is clothed in a frilly dress with lace and ribbons, more beautiful, in most cases, than any dress the child may own. The doll is placed upon the shelf in a prominent spot and admired, while the child is admonished to keep her dirty, destructive, nasty hands off.

How could the child miss the message? The doll is valuable and attractive; the child is nasty, dirty, and destructive. The doll symbolizes the beauty, technical skills, and "progress" its foreign creators are believed to possess. It was not created or produced by Belizeans or in Belize. It does not resemble any of the babies these children are likely to see. The parents see themselves as both training the child and protecting their investment. They are also sending messages that reinforce a sense of their own powerlessness and insignificance in the face of perceived foreign power and superiority.

RELIGION

It is not possible to fully understand religion and religious education in Belize today without reference to the past. According

to Caiger (1951), the British tried, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, to secure Belize as a colony away from the Spanish and "to wipe out all memory of Spanish pretensions, and to encourage exclusively the British way of life. One of the first outward and visible signs of a British colony in those days was the establishment of the National Church" (p. 120). Toward this end, as early as 1776, Rev. R. Shout was sent to establish the first Church of England in Belize. By 1812, the Anglican Church was founded, and by 1822, the Baptists were in the country. The Methodists and Presbyterians followed, with the Jesuits also firmly established by 1851 (Donohoe, 1946). In these early days, popular social gatherings nearly all centered around the church. Strict laws, according to Donohoe, forbade any entertainment not connected with religious groups.

Although it was reported in 1791 that the African practices of obeah, introduced by slaves, were punishable by death (Donohoe, 1946), there was some early conflict as to whether slaves were deserving recipients of the Christian religion. According to Caiger (1951), one early preacher was criticized for ministering too much to the "lower orders." A little later, however, the then-superintendent said that religious instruction of slaves and "lower classes" generally had been opposed, but that this practice should not continue. The work of the church thus survived, says Caiger, and was commended by the superintendents, especially for its attention to the "Negroes" and "emancipated slaves." The Christian church continues to thrive in Belize. Most people consider themselves religious.

One sultry tropical evening, I went with Anna to a church near her home where an evangelical team from the United States was holding a service. Anna, feeling that she had been remiss in the religious education of her boys, had undertaken the time-consuming and expensive task of bathing and dressing them in a fashion befitting church attendance. As with so many Belizean mothers, Anna felt that the boys should be saved and should learn about God and especially about how to be good.

As Anna and I entered the tiny church, the North American missionaries were already on the stage, and the room was full. The building is a small cinderblock structure with a low flat roof, bare

cement floor, and rows of wooden benches on each side of a middle aisle. The large ceiling fans whirred relentlessly against the heat of the night, competing with the voices of the religious leaders. The dark green walls were bare. Conspicuously absent was the blond-haired, blue-eyed, porcelain-skinned, religious iconography prevalent in most of the other churches in Belize. The audience, consisting mostly of women with babies on their laps and children by their sides, sat quietly and solemnly, slapping at an occasional mosquito or sand fly which invaded through the unscreened windows and open door.

The small room and low ceilings added to the perceived size of the North American preacher and his assistants, all of whom were dressed warmly in ties and dress shirts. The preacher's wife was a large woman who loomed over a small electric organ sitting on a TV snack table. The preacher roared and the organ thundered as the crowd listened to how to be saved, sang songs from the Christian hymnal brought from the United States, and read from the Holy Bible, reinforcing the message that, even in matters of the soul, guidance is needed from colonial models.

The service ended with many would-be converts filing to the front of the room, following the preacher's instructions to come forward and "be saved." Many children joined the procession. Even Anna went to the front to have hands laid on her and to say that she would like to receive the Holy Spirit.

I was reminded of what Anna's friend, Mary, had told me once about religion in Belize. She said that poor people are more religious than rich people. Poor people, she explained, suffer more and therefore have more need for God. The way I interpret this statement, within the context of many conversations and much observation, is that the poor people of Belize need the comfort of a God and they cannot afford to be too fussy about the form in which S/he comes. Unfortunately, along with God comes a set of images and messages reinforcing, once again, colonial attitudes of paternalism and ethnic hierarchy which have become "interred in habit," as Bourdieu (1977) suggests and fears they might. The price Belizeans pay for the comfort they seek reinforces their humble position in the world.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have presented two examples from a larger corpus of research materials that suggest that the socialization process left in place following the British colonization of Belize works to inhibit the children's sense of positive self-worth and limits opportunities for access to critical life-sustaining resources for a significant number of its population. An ideology of White/European supremacy, democratic equality, and Christian justice, with emphasis on individual responsibility and rewarded industry, are reinforced through the use of verbal and visual symbols at all cultural levels. Along with this ideology, the material conditions are those of a stagnant economy, foreign ownership of land and technology, and an inadequately funded, foreign-run educational system, dominated by a colonial missionary-style religious organization.

The way this socialization process is understood and evaluated by the children is complex. After many hours, however, of watching the children, talking with them, drawing with them, playing games and listening to their stories, I feel that I can make cautious generalizations about what they have learned. They have learned, first of all, to survive. They have learned ways to cope. And each child has learned how to cope in her or his own individual way. They have taken the messages they have been given by their teachers, their parents, their church, their community, and they have twisted them and used them in complex and personal ways to produce a way of understanding and a way of living. Some are proud and defiant and tough. Some are cunning and manipulative, and some are smart and cheerful and determined.

But there are also some general things they all seem to have learned. Not surprisingly, they have learned to look outside themselves to the world beyond Belize for the cultural patterns to follow, for the values to emulate, for guidance in sorting out a way of life. In this looking outward, they have learned the lessons of a world much larger and much broader than themselves, a world dominated by a few large and powerful groups of people who have historically been in a position, for reasons of altruism, religious fervor, lust for power, economic gain, paternalism, and egoism, to export aspects

of their lives which we have come to call culture: their art, their music, their religion, language, mode of educating, values, history.

And they have been good students, these Belizean children. They have gotten the messages; they have learned their lessons well. They have learned about hierarchies of power and privilege. By a very early age, they have learned that to be poor, to be Belizean, and to be Black is to be situated in a disadvantaged position in this hierarchy. They know that they can control aspects of their immediate environment but that ultimate control is in the hands of forces far away. They have learned that things most beautiful and important, worthwhile, and valued are someplace else, outside the boundaries of their everyday lives and outside the boundaries of Belize.

These children have learned to want those things their counterparts in much of the world have been taught to want, those things which they perceive will bring them the power and the privilege they lack. They want G.I. Joes and Tonka trucks and blue eyes and straight hair and television sets and Levis and blond-haired, blue-eyed dolls. They understand who has the power and the privilege, and they desire it because they have also learned that these things go together.

What they have not learned is that, with the help of an ideology of fairness and equality and justice, they have been made to believe in a myth about themselves and the world. It is a common myth, born in conquest and spread by empire. It is a myth about categories of people which appears real and immutable when, in reality, it is merely the alchemy of human minds. But the effects are not mythical, they are real. Children become defined, and learn to define themselves, by these constructs and are put into categories called "poor," called "Black," in a world where poorness and Blackness often translate into limited access to jobs, housing, and appropriate education.

This myth of immutable biological differences between groups of people serves to recreate inequality between the powerful and the powerless, between colonizers and colonized, between Black and White, as it undermines children's belief in their own power and their own potential as worthy human beings. The colonial ideology has become embedded in the fabric of the society, nega-

tively affecting the children and reminding us that colonial power goes beyond the obvious exploitation of land and labor to a more subtle and insidious ideological usurpation of the minds of future generations.

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Nancy Lundgren completed her Ph.D. in Anthropology in 1987 and teaches at Antioch University. Part of her work in Belize was done in 1984, with a Fulbright grant. Her undergraduate work was done at the University of Redlands and the University of Hawaii. Her graduate work was alternated with child rearing and jobs in social work and mental health.