

Caribbean Dependency Thought Revisited

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ABSTRACT — *This paper assesses the contribution, limitations, and contemporary relevance of Caribbean dependency thought (CDT). CDT emerged in the early post-colonial period in the English-speaking Caribbean with a mission to extend political decolonization to the intellectual, economic, social, and cultural spheres. While part of broader international currents of radical thought, it had its own special characteristics, associated with the theory of plantation economy and society. After outlining the historical context, the paper identifies four main expressions of CDT for review: “New World” thinking on epistemic dependency; the plantation school and multinational corporations as the institutional foundations of economic dependency; other structuralist formulations of dependency; and dependency as peripheral capitalism. Also discussed are the social and political theories of dependency and their policy prescriptions. CDT had a strong influence in Caribbean intellectual and political circles in the 1970s, but it generated vigorous critiques from both Marxist and mainstream social science. The paper suggests that its eventual decline was due to several unresolved theoretical, methodological, and political issues as well as to wider intellectual and political developments. The paper concludes by pointing to the significant historical contribution of CDT to Caribbean and Third World critical thought, and argues that its stance and method have relevance to critiques of contemporary globalization.*

RÉSUMÉ — *L'article donne un aperçu de l'apport et des limites de la « Caribbean dependency thought (CDT) » (pensée antillaise sur la dépendance) et évalue sa pertinence dans le contexte actuel. La CDT a vu le jour dans les Caraïbes anglophones, au début de la période post-coloniale. Sa mission était de répercuter l'aspect politique de la décolonisation sur les sphères intellectuelle, économique, sociale et culturelle. Bien que faisant partie de courants internationaux plus vastes de pensée radicale, la CDT avait ses caractéristiques propres qui se doublaient de la théorie de l'économie et de la société de plantation. L'article brosse d'abord un tableau du contexte historique, puis fait ressortir, pour analyse ultérieure, quatre grands axes de la CDT : la pensée du « Nouveau Monde » en matière de dépendance épistémique, l'école des plantations et les multinationales comme fondements institutionnels de la dépendance économique, les autres interprétations structuralistes de la dépendance et la dépendance en tant que capitalisme périphérique. Sont aussi abordés les théories sociales et politiques de la dépendance et les recommandations qui en découlent au chapitre des politiques. La CDT a eu une forte influence sur les milieux intellectuels et politiques des Caraïbes dans les années 70, mais a dû essuyer les critiques sévères que lui ont adressées tant les marxistes que les principales écoles de pensée des sciences sociales. L'article donne à entendre que le déclin qu'a éventuellement connu la CDT est attribuable aux nombreuses questions théoriques, méthodologiques et politiques restées sans réponse, et à l'ampleur des avancées, à l'époque, sur les plans intellectuel et politique. L'article se termine en soulignant l'influence historique considérable qu'a eu la CDT sur la pensée critique des Caraïbes et du Tiers-monde, et en affirmant que la position et la méthode de ladite pensée sont applicables à la critique du phénomène actuel de mondialisation.*

* I am indebted to Kari Polanyi Levitt, Dennis Pantin, Glenn Sankatsing, and Eric St. Cyr for their thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I remain responsible for whatever errors of fact, interpretation, or omission it may contain.

INTRODUCTION

Dependency thought in the anglophone Caribbean¹ emerged in the early post-colonial period of the 1960s and 1970s.² It attributed the problems of development to the region's continuing economic, cultural, and epistemic dependence on the metropolitan world, and it called for an extension of political decolonization to these spheres. Dependency thinking had a significant impact on the intellectual and political life of the region and on government policies. It also generated intense scholarly and political debate, and attracted critiques from both Marxist thinkers and mainstream scholars. Its influence diminished after the 1970s, but in recent years there has been a revival of interest in light of the growing disenchantment with neoliberal orthodoxy.

This essay aims to contribute to an understanding of the insights and the perceived deficiencies of Caribbean dependency thought (CDT) and to assess its historical significance.³ In Part I we outline the historical context of its emergence, explain its philosophical and epistemological approach, and summarize its main propositions in economics, and social and political theory. In Part II we discuss the critiques of the theoretical, political, and policy aspects of dependency thought and the resulting exchanges between dependency thinkers and their critics. In the concluding section we offer an assessment of dependency's legacy.

We must start by stating what we regard as "Caribbean dependency thought," since not all scholars agree on this subject, or even on the terms that are used. Central to the notion of dependency is asymmetry in power relations, or imbalances of power of whatever kind. Using this as a guide, we have covered in this essay four interrelated streams of CDT: (1) "New World" thought on epistemic dependency;⁴ (2) structuralist formulations of economic dependency; (3) the historical/institutional/structural approach to dependency, as expressed in the "plantation school" of Caribbean political economy and studies of multinational corporations; and (4) dependency as a socio-economic formation of peripheral capitalism.

For further reference, Figure 1 provides a "dependency map" showing the writers and subjects covered.⁵

1. In this essay "Caribbean" refers only to the anglophone Caribbean unless otherwise stated; "dependency thought," "dependency thinking," or simply "dependency" are sometimes used as shorthand for Caribbean dependency thought as a whole.

2. The "post-colonial period" in this essay refers to the period since 1962. Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago were granted political independence in 1962, Guyana and Barbados in 1966, and most of the remaining territories in the 1970s.

3. The author is himself a dependency writer of the 1970s and writes with some degree of insider's knowledge, though hopefully with some degree of academic detachment as well.

4. This refers to the thinking of the New World Group, an intellectual movement of the anglophone Caribbean in the 1960s, further discussed in Part I.

5. Although Walter Rodney's (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* could be said to be in the dependency tradition, his writing on the Caribbean was concerned with questions of race and class rather than with dependency as such. Here we differ from Blomström and Hettne (1984), who include Rodney's work in their review of Caribbean dependency.

Figure 1. Overview of Authors and Themes in Caribbean Dependency Writing: 1960s and 1970s

Precursor	Core	Related
LEWIS	BEST	BREWSTER
Unemployment	Epistemological Dependence	Inter-industry Relations and Policy Dependence
Dual Economy		
Industrialization	BEST & LEVITT	
	Pure Plantation Economy	BREWSTER & THOMAS
	Plantation Economy Modified	Regional Economic Integration
	Plantation Economy Further Modified	MCINTYRE
	New Mercantilism	Functional Dependence and Trade Policy
		Regional Economic Integration
	BECKFORD	
	Psychological Dependence	
	Plantation Economy	DEMAS
	Plantation Society	Size and Dependence
		Regional Economic Integration
	GIRVAN	
	Mineral Export Economy	JEFFERSON
	Multinational Corporations	Dependent Development
	THOMAS	ODLE
	Dependent Monetary Economy	Fiscal Dependence
	Dependence and Transformation	
		GIRVAN, ODLE, ARTHUR
		Technological Dependence

I. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

A. The New World Group

CDT emerged in the 1960s, a time of significant political, social, and intellectual ferment in the British Caribbean. By then, certain political questions had been settled by the events immediately preceding and following the Second World War. Labour had won the right to organize; governments now accepted a responsibility to promote the welfare of the population; universal suffrage and self-government had been achieved and most of the territories were on the road to political independence within the framework of the West Indies Federation. The issues occupying the attention of a younger generation were the kind of development strategies to be pursued after independence and the kind of international alliances to be made. A major topic of debate was whether independence should be interpreted merely as a change of legal status or as an opportunity for more radical social and economic changes that addressed the legacy of colonial rule. Overshadowing this was the ideological competition of the Cold War, introduced into the region by a series of events, including the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and the growth of social and political unrest in several territories.

Against this background, the establishment of a Faculty of Social Sciences at the Mona (Jamaica) Campus of the University (then College) of the West Indies (UWI), and the rapid localization of its academic staff, provided an institutional base for the emergence of critical thought. Much of the impetus for intellectual activity sprang from a desire to “localize” scholarship in the social sciences and to create a homegrown development model that avoided the “false choice” between the capitalist and socialist paths. The West Indian Society for the Study of Social Issues was formed at Mona in

1960 among young West Indian faculty and students in the social sciences and history; later it was re-born as the New World Group in Guyana in 1962.⁶ During the 1960s New World grew into a pan-Caribbean intellectual movement with a stated mission to change the way of thinking and living in the area. This movement was the principal progenitor of CDT.

B. Epistemic Dependency

New World thinkers argued that the root of the Caribbean development *problématique* lay in epistemic dependence, the reliance of regional elites on “imported” concepts and theories of limited relevance to actual conditions in the region. They proposed the creation of a Caribbean-centred cosmology and theory of society derived from historical study: the “epistemic decolonization of the region” (Bogues 2003, 149). The argument was first put forward for the specific purpose of formulating a program that could form the basis for a coalition government in Guyana, which was at the time, in 1962, deeply divided along ethnic and ideological lines:

Operational considerations have led the different leaders to assign different ideological tags to the “end product” and to associate it with concrete institutional forms borrowed from their respective external sources of inspiration ...

*Ultimately the best road ahead can only be found by way of analysis of the specific economic, social and cultural conditions (and history) of the society ...*Uncritical borrowing of foreign models without the intervening stage of theoretical formulation serves merely to import considerations which neither recognise the possibilities of change permitted by local conditions nor respect the limits on these possibilities imposed by them⁷ (New World Associates 1971, 241; emphasis added).

“Cultural dependence,” “economic dependence,” and “structural” versus “functional” dependence⁸ were notions introduced in this and other early New World writing. However, the epistemic dimension was paramount. One author condemned West Indian territories for relying on the rest of the world for “ideas about themselves” (McIntyre 1971, 166), while another spoke of “the ... dependency syndrome in our psychological makeup [which] is a legacy of the system we are destroying [that] ... provides the basis for becoming genuinely independent” (Beckford 1972, 234–35).⁹ Hence, it was basic to New World thinking that change in the Caribbean would have to begin at the level of ideas.¹⁰ In a seminal paper called “Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom,” the intellectual leader of New World argued that “thought is the (political) action for us” (Best 1971a, 23).

6. The leading theoretician of the New World Group was Lloyd Best from Trinidad and Tobago, who had been trained as an economist at Cambridge University and joined the staff of the UWI’s Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) on the Mona Campus in 1958. He founded the New World Group in 1962 in Georgetown, Guyana, along with the Guyanese lawyer and publisher David de Caires, while working as an advisor to the administration of the then premier Dr. Cheddi Jagan.

7. Another term used to describe this condition was “dysfunctional ideologising” (Best 1965).

8. According to McIntyre (1971, 166) “structural dependence” is an inevitable consequence of the size and structure of West Indian economies, while “functional dependence” “arises as a result of the particular policies chosen and can therefore be avoided if alternative policies are pursued.”

9. In the preface to his *Persistent Poverty* Beckford (1972) also acknowledges his debt to Best; note, for example, the following passage. “Too often we view our problems through the eyes of metropolitan man; and our analyses of these problems depend too inordinately on analytical constructs developed for, and appropriate to, North Atlantic society but which may be inappropriate for the Third World” (vi). He was a friend and intellectual colleague of Best and succeeded the latter as editor of *New World Quarterly*.

10. This has been characterized as a philosophy of the “sovereignty of thought” (Bogues 2003, 150).

Accordingly, the practice of the New World movement centred on the preparation and discussion of papers and the publication of journals and pamphlets. However, direct political action was eschewed.¹¹

C. Economic Dependence

1. *Caribbean Structuralism*

The economic aspect of dependence received a great deal of attention in New World writing. To set this in context, we need to consider that the prevailing paradigms guiding economics teaching and research in the region during the 1960s were those of Keynesian macroeconomics, neoclassical microeconomics, and the “dual economy” development model of W. Arthur Lewis (1954). What all three paradigms had in common was representation of the economy as an independently functioning system in which markets are cleared through the interaction of supply and demand by locally owned firms and resident consumers, and the determinants of short-period economic activity and long-term growth are endogenous to the economy. As a consequence, it was assumed that governments could use fiscal and monetary policy for short-term management of the economy, complemented by a policy to attract foreign capital to supplement local savings and finance the level of investment needed for long-term growth.

The dependency perspective began by observing that Caribbean economies did not function in this way. The level of exports was the chief determinant of the level of economic activity, and exports were foreign-owned and dependent on foreign markets. Therefore, governments were largely powerless to influence local economic activity by means of monetary policy, and deficit financing of public spending was constrained by the structure of a small, open economy. From this point of departure grew a body of work documenting and analysing the asymmetrical relationships of Caribbean economies with the rest of the world in trade, investment, finance, and technology; the low degree of inter-industry relations within the economies; and the limited ability of governments to plan and influence economic activity. These are summarized in Figure 2. Caribbean structuralism drew on the Latin American structuralist tradition pioneered by Prebisch (1950) and of the succeeding generation of structuralist writers.¹² However, the Caribbean version was informed by an acute sense of the dependence that resulted from the small size, high degree of openness, and recent colonial past of Caribbean economies.

Dependency was also applied to the study of particular sectors of the economies. There was the theory of the “dependent monetary economy,” in which the local currency is tied to a metropolitan currency and the banking system is foreign-owned, with negative effects on economic stability and development (Thomas 1965). Caribbean public finances were characterized as exhibiting “fiscal dependence” due to reliance on foreign loans and grants (Odle 1975). “Technological dependence” as a consequence of foreign direct investment and the strategies of multinational corporations in Caribbean economies was also posited in studies of mining and manufacturing industries.¹³

11. This practice became a source of controversy; see section II.B.1. “Philosophy, Epistemology, and Theory of Change.”

12. For example Seers (1963, 1964), Furtado (1963), and Sunkel (1973). There was considerable professional contact between Seers and Sunkel and Caribbean dependency writers. Girvan (1973) compared the Caribbean and Latin American dependency schools of the early 1970s.

13. See Bardouille (1985), Farrell (1979), Girvan (1979), and Odle and Arthur (1985).

Figure 2. Structuralist Perspective on Economic Dependency

FACTORS:

1. Exports are a high proportion of national output and imports are a high proportion of national expenditure.
2. Exports are concentrated in a narrow range of products.
3. Exports are concentrated in a narrow range of markets.
4. Export industries are foreign-owned.
5. Agricultural export industries are high-cost and receive preferential treatment in foreign markets.
6. Mineral commodity exports are extracted by multinational corporations and transferred to their foreign subsidiaries under conditions of vertical integration.
7. Foreign ownership predominates in other key sectors, especially banking, manufacturing, and tourism.

CONSEQUENCES:

1. The level of income and employment and the rate of economic growth are dependent on:
 - (a) demand and prices on foreign markets;
 - (b) the decisions of foreign corporations on investment and the sourcing of raw materials; and
 - (c) the decisions of foreign governments regarding trade preferences.
2. The level of income and employment is vulnerable to exogenous shocks arising out of:
 - (a) economic downturns abroad;
 - (b) changes in international demand due to changes in tastes and technology;
 - (c) price fluctuations in international markets; and
 - (d) changes in the prices of imported commodities.
3. There is dependence on foreign capital, technology, entrepreneurship, and management in the principal industries in the economy.
4. Profits generated in the principal industries in the economy tend to be repatriated by the foreign multinational corporations rather than reinvested in the local economy.
5. There is dependence on imported raw materials and intermediate inputs in the principal export industries and in the manufacturing industry.
6. There are limited inter-industry relationships within the domestic economy: economic expansion in one industry does not induce expansion in other industries.
7. Economic growth in the dependent economy is not self-propelled or self-sustaining.

Source: Author; based on New World Associates (1971), Best (1965), Thomas (1965), McIntyre (1971), Brewster and Thomas (1967), Brewster (1973), Jefferson (1972), Girvan (1970) and Demas (1975).

2. Historical/Institutional/Structural Approach: The Plantation School and Multinational Corporations

Some New World writers extended the structuralist perspective on economic dependency into theories of “plantation economy” and on the effects of multinational corporations. Historical and institutional influences were held as the major factors explaining the structure and functioning of the contemporary economy. The chief historical influence was the nature of the economy established during the era of slavery in the Caribbean, and the chief institutional influences were those of the joint stock trading companies set up under mercantilism, the slave plantations they created, and the multinational corporations of the modern era.

Using a method they called *histoire raisonnée* (“reasoned history”), Best and Levitt (1969) proposed three models to represent the typical Caribbean economy in successive stages.¹⁴ Model I, “Pure Plantation Economy,” represented the period of slave-based production under mercantilism; Model II, “Plantation Economy Modified,” represented the post-emancipation period; Model III,

14. See Best (1968), Best and Levitt (1969), and Levitt and Best (1975).

“Plantation Economy Further Modified,” represented the modern period. They argued that the legacy of Model I was “an endowment of mechanisms of economic adjustment which deprive the region of internal dynamic” (Levitt and Best 1975, 37). For example, in Model II the growth of local industry is hindered by the culturally entrenched preference for imported goods, by the established tendency of the plantation sector to expand in the same product line in periods of “boom,” and to consume capital in periods of “bust,” and by the tradition of state support to plantation activity. In Model III new industries are owned by multinational corporations that control decision-making, investment, technology, the supply of inputs, and the processing and disposal of outputs. This acts as a further institutional obstacle to the emergence of local entrepreneurship, to the growth of domestic savings and investment, to the spread of inter-industry linkages, and in general to internally driven growth.¹⁵

For Best and Levitt (1969), the plantation economy exists across historical time and across sectors: the new industries of Model III reproduce the characteristics of the dominant plantation sector in Model I. For Beckford (1972), it exists across space: plantation economies are those economies in the Third World where plantation agriculture is the dominant activity. His version of the thesis focused on distortions in resource allocation and the dynamic underdevelopment effects of the plantation system, which results in persistent poverty of the people in plantation economies. At the core of both versions of plantation economy were the notions that (1) the plantation sector exhibits structural rigidities in resource allocation, which inhibits economic diversification and transformation over time, and (2) that the true potential for transformation lays outside of the plantation sector,¹⁶ which is deprived of resources. Both versions were also, to a significant degree, institutionally driven.

Complementing the thesis were propositions on the operations of multinational corporations in economies in the region, which had become structured around the export earnings and fiscal revenues generated by the exploitation of mineral resources by foreign companies, characterized as “mineral-export economies” (Girvan 1970). In this case dependent underdevelopment was attributed to the vertical integration of subsidiaries with parent companies, which prevents the mineral-export sector from serving as a growth pole within the host economy through backward and forward linkages, technology dissemination, and the reinvestment of profits in other industries. Analogies with the functioning of the plantation economy were drawn; mineral-export economies in the Caribbean were one variant of Model III.

Table 1 summarizes the interrelationship of this body of work in historical periodization, institutions, and structures. These dependency writers argued that they were representing the structure and functioning of Caribbean economies more realistically than the prevalent paradigms of metropolitan origin. They argued that the typical firms in the Caribbean are not the independent competitive firms represented in neoclassical microeconomics; rather, they are parts of wider systems of decision-making and resource allocation. Economic dependence was seen to be a property of the economic system at the level of the individual firm that complemented the structural dependence of the macroeconomy. They also believed that their representation of Caribbean economies was more accurate than W. Arthur Lewis’ (1954) dual economy model of development. In the Lewis model the growth dynamic lies in the capitalist sector, which reinvests its surplus and eventually absorbs the traditional sector. In plantation economy the capitalist sector is the source of the problem; it lacks an independent dynamic of its own, but frustrates the growth of the traditional

15. These are merely highlights of some of the arguments; the reader is urged to consult Best (1968) and Levitt and Best (1975) for further details.

16. In Best and Levitt’s (1969) schema this is known as the “residential” sector; for Beckford (1972), it is the peasant sector.

Table 1. Typologies and Institutions of Authors Using the Historical/Structural/Institutional Approach

	Slavery (1600–1838)	Post-Emancipation (1838–1938)	Contemporary (post–1938)
BEST & LEVITT			
Typology	Metropolitan economy Overseas economy Hinterland of exploitation Pure Plantation Economy (Model I)	Plantation Economy Modified (Model II)	Plantation Economy Further Modified (Model III)
Dominant	Joint-stock trading company	Family-owned plantation	Branch plant of multinational corporation
Institutions	Slave plantation	Company-owned plantation Peasant proprietor	
BECKFORD			
Typology		POST-EMANCIPATION & CONTEMPORARY Plantation agriculture Plantation system Plantation economy Plantation society	
Dominant		Family-owned plantation	
Institutions		Company-owned plantation Peasant proprietor	
GIRVAN			
Typology		POST-EMANCIPATION & CONTEMPORARY Mineral export economy Corporate economy	
Dominant		Subsidiary of multinational corporation	
Institutions			

Source: Author, based on Best (1968), Best and Levitt (1969), Beckford (1972), and Girvan (1970).

sector, which is where the true potential for economic transformation lies. Lewis believed that foreign investment in the manufacturing industry would be a means of initiating self-sustaining growth by accessing capital, markets, and technology not locally available (Lewis 1950). Plantation theorists argued that multinational corporations ended up draining capital from the local economy through repatriation of profits, and promoted dependency on imported intermediate inputs and on capital-intensive technology. This was why the policy of promoting foreign investment had failed to solve the unemployment problem.¹⁷

3. *Dependency as Peripheral Capitalism*

This version of economic dependency derived from a perspective in which the historical development of capitalism since the 15th century has resulted in a single, interconnected world capitalist system with developed “centres” and underdeveloped “peripheries.”¹⁸ It is distinguished from classical Marxism by its belief that peripheral economies are incapable of independent development, and from structuralism by its unit of analysis, which was global rather than national. In the Caribbean context it drew on insights from both approaches, and developed as an extension of studies of plantation economy, multinational corporations, and regional economic integration.

17. The policy was characterized by New World writers as “industrialisation by invitation.”

18. Prominent examples of this approach are Amin (1974), Frank (1967), and Wallerstein (1979).

Thomas (1974) formulated a theory of “dependence and transformation” centred on the notion of the “neo-colonial mode of production,” which was proposed as the underlying factor in the underdevelopment and dependency of small peripheral economies. The neo-colonial mode of production takes the form of double divergence: the divergence between resource use and domestic demand on one hand, and between domestic demand and the needs of the broad mass of the population on the other (59). Thomas’ theory was cast in a neo-Marxist framework and was offered as a contribution to the debate on the transition to socialism in underdeveloped countries, although it was strongly influenced by his previous work on Caribbean dependency and regional economic integration.

Beckford (1978) proposed that “plantation capitalist societies” were to be regarded as a special socio-economic formation of peripheral capitalism. His definition of dependency as the absence of a situation “in which the people of a particular nation state (or country) have full control over their resources and total power to utilize these resources for the benefit of themselves” (1975, 78) shows the influence of Marxist thinking about the role of the social relations of production. The study of multinational corporations in mineral-export economies was also recast in the framework of the emergence of monopoly capitalism in the metropolitan economies and its extension into the peripheral capitalist economies of the Caribbean (Girvan 1976).

It can also be argued that Best and Levitt’s (1975) theory of plantation economy was essentially a theory of peripheral capitalist development in one of its concrete formations. The authors presented Model I as a creation of mercantile capitalism in the metropole; they associated the emergence of Model II with the transition to industrial capitalism; and they argued that the metropolitan-based multinational corporations of Model III were to be regarded as “the New Mercantilism.” However, there were two key differences between their approach and the Marxist analysis of capitalism. First, Marxist historical materialism is a determinate system in which capitalist development obeys certain historical laws, while Best and Levitt employed a method of *a posteriori* historical interpretation (37). Second, the Marxist analysis was centred on the role of relations of *production*, while the Best and Levitt models of plantation theory focused on relations of *exchange*.¹⁹ The relevance of classical Marxism was one of the principal issues in the debate between CDT and its critics.²⁰

D. Social and Political Theory of Dependency

The branch of dependency thought that posited the plantation as the foundational institution of Caribbean society had a corresponding social and political theory. An ongoing subject of interest was the role of race and class, and more recently that of gender, in plantation society, and, linked to this, the extent to which the Marxist categories of class can be used. Beckford (2000b, fn. 4) proposed “a synthesis of how race and class make plantation society a sort of ‘special case’ in the history of social formations.”²¹ He argued that in plantation society “[the] labour regime is based on race...” and that this “is not deriving classes in the classical system of Marxist analysis” (1978, 24). In his schema, black labour in plantation society takes the place of the proletariat in classical Marxism, and class exploitation takes the form of black dispossession. Girvan (1975) used the plantation theory’s typology of “Hinterlands of Conquest, of Exploitation and of Settlement”²² as the framework for interpreting the political economy

19. On this point see Thomas (1968).

20. See especially section II.B, “Critiques of Dependency,” below.

21. In the same passage referred to, Beckford (2006) critiqued his earlier analysis of this question as having “several weaknesses ... specifically, its handling of the class question was overshadowed by the emphasis on race.”

22. This typology was the point of departure of the Best-Levitt plantation economy models, having been adapted from the work of Wagley (1957).

of race in the Americas, which was the historical origin of racially based ideologies of superiority/subordination and of racially centred resistance movements. Later, this was extended into an analysis of gender relations within a dependency framework using a historical materialist methodology, producing what was called a “Third World Marxist synthesis” (Green 2001, 62).

In political theory, Thomas (1984) argued that the rise of the authoritarian state in Third World countries was a consequence of the constraints of peripheral capitalism: the state was used as a means of capital accumulation for a local bourgeoisie that was weak and had few other avenues available to it.²³ On the other hand, the use of the Marxist categories of class was vigorously and consistently opposed by Best, who argued that in Caribbean society the relevant divisions were those of “tribe” or “ethnicity.” He also proposed a theory of Caribbean politics centred on the concepts of “Crown colony government” and “doctor politics,” characterized by a culture of centralized administration and authoritarian one-person rule.²⁴

E. The Policy Dimension

The policies associated with CDT were primarily in the area of economics. There was considerable diversity of views on this subject; the main point of agreement was the desirability of establishing an economy that is propelled by its own internal dynamic. We identify three main policy streams: (1) proposals for regional economic integration/regional cooperation; (2) proposals for institutional and structural reform centred on changes in ownership in key sectors of the economy; and (3) economic self-reliance in accumulation, production, and consumption.

Emphasis on regional economic integration was greatest among those who believed that the small size of Caribbean economies was the principal factor in their dependency.²⁵ Regionalism would be a means of broadening the domestic market and the natural resource base and would help overcome the size constraint. Hence, in the aftermath of the failure of the West Indies Federation of 1958–1962, a kind of “economic federalism” was seen as an instrument of economic decolonization.²⁶ Even so, there was disagreement on the significance of size vis-à-vis cultural and institutional factors in sustaining dependency.²⁷

Those who believed that institutions were the primary factor in dependency, while supporting regional integration, emphasized changes in ownership. Best and Levitt (1969) called for localization of ownership²⁸ to promote inter-industry linkages and local decision-making. They envisaged Model IV, depicting the characteristics of a self-reliant economy, but the work on this model was never completed. Others called for nationalization of foreign-owned plantations and comprehensive land reform in order to transfer productive resources for the use of the mass of the population (Beckford 1972), or for nationalization of the foreign-owned mineral-export sector to capture its surpluses for investment in the local economy and to promote local value added industries (Girvan 1971). Thomas (1974) proposed that state ownership under the rule of a worker–peasant alliance would provide the

23. Thomas (1984) attributed the rise of the authoritarian state to interaction of the low level of development of the productive forces and the propensity of a petty bourgeois class of political leaders to use the state as a means of material accumulation, which degenerates into endemic corruption and authoritarian rule.

24. See the discussion by Ryan (2003b).

25. See in particular McIntyre (1971), Demas (1965), Brewster and Thomas (1967), Best and Levitt (1969), Girvan (1967), Beckford (1967), Jefferson (1972).

26. See especially Brewster and Thomas (1967), Demas (1965), and McIntyre (1971).

27. This was the subject of a debate between Demas (1965), who emphasized the former, and Best (1971b), who emphasized the latter. Demas later elaborated on his position (1975).

28. “Localization” can be distinguished from nationalization (i.e., state takeover of private enterprise) in that it can take the form of equity participation by local private investors in a foreign-owned enterprise.

political and institutional basis for the transition to socialism. From this would be launched a development strategy based on two “iron laws of transformation”: convergence between resource use and demand, and between demand and the needs of the mass of the population.

The most far-reaching proposals were those that combined changes in ownership with a strategy of “delinking” from the international capitalist system by means of national economic self-reliance, planning production to satisfying the basic needs of the population, and diversifying external economic relations to other Third World countries and to the socialist bloc (Thomas 1974; Beckford and Witter 1982). Here CDT intersected with wider international currents in Third World economic thinking associated with the campaign for a New International Economic Order and ideas of South–South cooperation and collective self-reliance.

II. DEPENDENCY DEBATES

A. Impact of Dependency Thought

Dependency thought flourished from around 1963 to 1975, giving rise to a considerable quantity of published material (see references). Its intellectual and political impact was summarized by one of its leading critics, writing in 1971:

For almost a decade, the New World and its associates were the most influential force amongst the progressive intellectuals primarily inside but also outside the University of the West Indies. In Kingston, Port-of-Spain and Georgetown the ideas of the group, embodied primarily in a quarterly journal, occasional pamphlets and public forums, had a deep influence on the thinking of students, university lecturers, high school teachers, journalists, publishers, artists, lawyers and others who wanted to develop a better understanding of West Indian society in order to contribute to its “progressive” transformation. From time to time, the work and social significance of the group was such as to attract hostile comment from members of the ruling class as well as acts of repression from the state, relatively mild in retrospect, against its leading public figures (Munroe 1990, 204).

In the mid-1970s the school was regarded as “the leading tendency in Caribbean scholarship” (Harris 1978, 18). These were years of ideological and political radicalization in the anglophone Caribbean,²⁹ marked by the influence of Rastafarianism, black power, the Cuban Revolution, national liberation movements in Africa and Asia, Marxism-Leninism, and Third World economic nationalism. The contribution of dependency thought was to provide a body of ideas and literature based on research on the Caribbean, a theoretical and programmatic basis for radical politics and policies that was rooted in the Caribbean experience.

29. One notes here the Rodney Riot in Jamaica in 1968, the Black Power Revolt in Trinidad and Tobago in 1970, the declaration of “Cooperative Socialism” of the Forbes Burnham administration in Guyana in 1970 and of “Democratic Socialism” by the Michael Manley administration in Jamaica in 1974, the nationalistic economic policies of the Eric Williams administration in Trinidad and Tobago after 1973, and the Marxist-Leninist stance of the Maurice Bishop-led People’s Revolutionary Government that took power in Grenada in 1979.

B. Critiques of Dependency

As it gained influence, dependency thought attracted much critical evaluation. There was a major debate with the Caribbean Marxist left, which sought to establish itself as a rival system of radical thought. Scholarly critiques also came from the non-Marxist mainstream in the social sciences. We group the critiques into three main areas: (1) philosophy, epistemology, and theory of change; (2) economic and social theory; and (3) policies.

1. *Philosophy, Epistemology, and Theory of Change*

New World's foundational stance on the need for a special Caribbean epistemology became a major point of contention. Critics disagreed with the wholesale rejection of "imported" knowledge that they read into the call for epistemic autonomy. They pointed out that the dependency writers themselves made considerable use of the work of foreign scholars, and argued that the theoretical approaches available to Caribbean economists and other social scientists were far wider than the particular kinds of "imported" theory rejected by dependency theorists (Benn 1974, 250; Cumper 1974). Stone (1978), while being sympathetic to dependency's epistemic mission, nevertheless believed that the "attempt at nationalizing social science concepts" may have "reached an excessive point" (5).³¹ This issue was extensively debated at a 1975 seminar attended by the region's leading social scientists, where the consensus was that "while there are indeed ideographic or unique features in the Caribbean situation, these features *do not in themselves justify the need for either a distinct Caribbean methodology or an autochthonous Caribbean theory*" (Lindsay 1978, vii; emphasis added).

A study of the relevant texts shows that New World writers freely acknowledged their use of international scholarship and cited with approval the work of several non-Caribbean scholars.³² However, they were not always careful to make the distinction between rejection of *prevailing orthodoxies* and a rejection of *all* kinds of "imported knowledge." The frequently polemical style of their critiques may also have opened them to the charge of epistemic xenophobia. But it is not clear that their search for an "autochthonous" Caribbean theory necessarily meant advocacy of a distinct Caribbean methodology. Certainly, the methodology of historically and institutionally derived theory they employed was not new.

Another issue was whether the specific content of knowledge localization would necessarily be in the interest of all classes and groups in the society. Best's argument for "independent thought" assumed the existence of a national interest encapsulating the interests of all social groups. Discovery of this interest would be facilitated by the intellectual role of "validating elites" (e.g., Best 2006). But this could be problematic in light of acute divisions based on property ownership in Caribbean society (Lamming 1996). Beckford (1972) argued that the interests of the dispossessed (black) population should be the point of departure:

The most intractable problem is the colonized condition of the minds of the people. ... We need further to recognize that among the people of plantation society the most colonized minds are to be found within the higher ranks of the social order. ... *The intellectual classes*

31. Stone made the comment at an ISER seminar in 1975, referred to below.

32. For example, Best's and Beckford's explicit use of the work of US anthropologist Charles Wagley, Brazilian economist Celos Furtado, and British economist Dudley Seers. Levitt, who was born in Austria and came to the Caribbean from Canada, made extensive use of the work of Canadian economic historian Mel Watkins.

cannot lead in the struggle; they need first to decolonize their own minds and to develop genuinely independent scholarship in the process (235; emphasis added).

The Marxist critique was that the very notion of epistemic autonomy was unscientific in that it negated the presumed universal applicability of the method of historical materialism. The Marxists also argued that independent thought could not be generated as a matter of will by the intellectual classes, since ideas are the product of the material conditions of existence. “Relevance” would therefore be achieved by applying historical materialism to the concrete conditions of class formation in the Caribbean (Munroe 1990).³³ The Marxist critique of New World thinking in 1971 by the movement’s leading theoretician marked “a closure to intellectual inquiry on this matter for the Jamaican left” (Lewis 2003, 92).³⁴ Caribbean Marxism, which was largely influenced by Soviet thinking, therefore opposed itself to New World thought and the plantation school.

Finally, there was the issue of the decisive role attributed to “thought” in the New World theory of change, and the political practice that flowed from this. Both Marxist and non-Marxist critics argued that intellectual activity could not be divorced from the role of leadership and of political organization in effecting change through politics (Benn 2004). The subject was the source of continuous contention within New World itself; eventually it led to a major split within the movement and to its demise. During the 1970s most of the movement’s leading figures entered national politics or accepted government positions in their respective countries.³⁵ The arguments of the critics were, therefore, apparently confirmed by New World’s own political experience. Nonetheless, the lessons to be learned from this experience for the “theory of change” and the role of the intellectual were never fully explored. Two decades later, Best (1996) continued to maintain an eclectic stance on the matter:

The central epistemological question in all times and all places is: how do people learn? [...] How do they apprehend reality? [...] The related political question is: how do you achieve mobilization? [...] *(the answer is quite simply that we do not know the answer to either of these questions.* The only lesson you can learn from history is that there is no lesson you can learn from history (8–9; emphasis added).

For its part, the Caribbean Marxist movement went through an internal crisis over the question of the applicability of classical Marxism after the implosion of the Grenadian Revolution in 1983.³⁶ The ensuing internal divisions within the movement led to the dissolution of the Workers Party of

33. The position of Caribbean Marxists, represented by the Trevor Munroe-led Workers Party of Jamaica, is not to be confused with the neo-Marxist version of dependency as “peripheral capitalism,” later adopted by some dependency writers.

34. Subsequent Marxist critiques of the economics of the plantation school by Harris (1978) and by Bernal, Figueroa, and Witter (1984) also departed from the *a priori* assumption of the validity of historical materialism.

35. In Trinidad, the New World Group under the leadership of James Millette became involved in public debates and was widely perceived as a political party in the making. Best vigorously disagreed, and in 1969 he left the Trinidad New World Group to found the Tapia House Group (Millette 2003). Subsequently, Millette himself founded a political party, and the Trinidad New World Group collapsed. Millette and Best both unsuccessfully contested the 1976 Trinidad and Tobago elections as leaders of their respective political parties. Best also accepted appointments as leader of the opposition in the Trinidad and Tobago senate in 1974–1975 and again in 1981–1983. In Jamaica, both Beckford and Girvan left positions of leadership in the New World Group in 1969 to join forces with the *Abeng* newspaper and political movement, which embraced a form of radical black nationalism. By the early 1970s, most of the members of the Jamaica New World Group were either with Michael Manley’s newly radicalized People’s National Party that took office after the 1972 elections, or with Munroe’s Workers Party of Jamaica.

36. In October 1983 the People’s Revolutionary Government in Grenada was convulsed by an internal factional dispute, which ended with the murder of the prime minister and several of his cabinet colleagues, and thus led to the US invasion and occupation ordered by President Ronald Reagan.

Jamaica, which was closely associated with the Grenadian experiment. Its leading intellectuals now engaged in a prolonged period of reappraisal of their theory and method; one result was a recantation of their critique of New World's position and their acknowledgement of the value of the search for a philosophy and cosmology rooted in the Caribbean experience. One expressed the view that had Best's plea for independent thought been followed, the tragic events in Grenada might have been avoided (Lewis 2003, 90).

2. *Economic and Social Theory*

What was the theoretical status of the plantation school? Was the work of dependency writers sufficiently empirical and quantitative for it to be professionally acceptable? What is the intrinsic value, if any, in generating "stylized facts" without at the same time engaging in mathematical formalization and econometric testing? Did the theory of plantation society overstate continuity and underestimate change? These were the main issues in economic and social theory that divided the dependency school from its critics.

Some critics took issue with the typologies proposed in plantation economy and certain propositions about multinational corporations.³⁷ But the major controversy that arose was over the status of the model of pure plantation economy. The most frequent charge, made by mainstream economists, was that this did not meet the requirements of a true model in that it failed to specify its causal relationships, had no empirical content, and could not be (or was not) empirically tested. Hence, it had little or no predictive value and it could not be considered as the basis of a theory.³⁸ A similar charge was sometimes levelled at the work of the dependency school as a whole.³⁹

The authors believed that these were the wrong standards by which to judge their work. Levitt (2003, 254–55) explained that the model of pure plantation economy was part of a body of research whose intention was to present a set of stylized facts about the workings of a typical Caribbean economy and to develop an accounting framework to be used as an instrument of national economic planning. However, Levitt wrote, "the work was not completed; the incomplete work was not published in accessible form;⁴⁰ [and] national planning went out of style" (203, 255).⁴¹ She believed that had this work been generally available it would have avoided misunderstanding on the part of critics and would have helped spawn further innovative work by younger scholars (Levitt 1998, 11; 2003, 258).⁴²

Plantation theorists also believed that conceptual innovation based on stylized facts was a useful and necessary task *in its own right*. Best (1998) responded to the critics by asserting that the models were "put forward as a simple tool for grasping complexity and as a partial formulation meant to focus on the whole"(35). In presenting *Persistent Poverty*, Beckford (1972) explained that his approach was "exploratory," aimed at opening up "avenues for further inquiry." Anticipating the crit-

37. See Thomas (1968, 340–42), Harris (1978, 19), Lewis (1970).

38. See De Castro (1968, 350), Stone (1978, 6), Harris (1978, 18), and comments by Sudama, Pantin, and Farrell, all three cited by Best (1998, 32–33).

39. See Brown and Brewster (1974, 53) and Cumper (1974, 477).

40. The reason for this, according to Levitt, was that Best's priorities had shifted to politics, and that subsequent attempts on Levitt's part to complete the work were frustrated by a series of events, including withdrawal of support by the Canadian International Development Agency for "security" reasons and, later, termination of planning in Trinidad and Tobago due to the effects of the oil boom (Levitt 2003, 259).

41. The unpublished work included an algebraic formulation of Model I and a set of national accounts for the economy of Trinidad and Tobago in the form of a social accounting matrix, representing Model III.

42. In 2001–2006, Levitt and Best finally completed their preparation of the plantation economy essays, which are now due for publication by the UWI Press in 2007.

ics, he declared, “I do not mind being charged with over-generalisation and under-documentation. This is an ‘ideas’ book. What we need most are studies pregnant with ideas, not studies full of sterile detail” (vi–viii).

The basic issues were, therefore, those of approach and methodology. Judging by the initially positive response to their ideas, the view of plantation theorists on the matter was shared by many of their contemporaries. In retrospect, one econometrician found that the plantation model had been on firm ground in proceeding “from the concrete to the abstract, and with description preceding explanation and prediction,” and noted that “the development of any school of thought [is] a slow and painstaking process” (St. Cyr 1998, 126–27). The problem was that the initiative was short-lived, and the kind of follow-up work needed to firmly establish a genuine “school of Caribbean structuralist economics” did not take place (Levitt 2003, 256). Notably, other economists were at this time exploring economic dependence from a quantitative perspective,⁴³ but this trend was not sustained either. Only much later, in the context of revisiting the plantation economy model, did some economists of a later generation begin to reassess its potential from this standpoint. Best and Levitt’s Model III was reportedly used as a basis to develop a social accounting matrix with a formal general equilibrium model and a comprehensive macroeconomic system capable of generating testable propositions.⁴⁴ An input–output study for the Trinidad and Tobago economy in 1962 and 1987 also found empirical support for the propositions of Model III (Nicholls and Boodoo 2003). There remains, therefore, the challenge of sustaining and strengthening this line of enquiry.

Another major critique, which was made from the standpoint of social theory, was that the “theory of plantation society” privileged continuity to the detriment of change. Critics argued that the structure of Caribbean society had been significantly altered after emancipation by the establishment of a peasantry and by urbanization, industrialization, and economic diversification in the 20th century.⁴⁵ Hence, in the words of one scholar, the plantation school had not “solved all the theoretical issues pertaining to the development problem in the Caribbean ... [or provided] ... a totally adequate framework for the study of socio-political change in the region” (Benn 1974, 258).

The substantive issue here is the role of history in theorizing about the present. The critics conceded that historical factors are important but not decisive or all-encompassing in their effects. The implication was that the plantation paradigm was at risk of “over-determining” explanations of the present and omitting important elements of change. The critique gains strength from the fact of growing differentiation, both within and between Caribbean countries, in the post-colonial period. In Girvan’s view (2002, 18–19), the plantation paradigm was a necessary and powerful tool in calling attention to the colonial legacy in Caribbean society at the historical moment of political independence. But that analytical framework needs to be continually modified as a result of the evolution of economic and social structures and processes in the post-colonial period.

3. Policies

Several critics questioned the adequacy or feasibility of the policy aspect of CDT. One view was that the Best-Levitt theory of plantation economy was more successful in diagnosis than in prescription, providing a general theory of Caribbean underdevelopment but not a theory of development (Blackman 2003, 399). Another critic argued that the theory was deliberately vague because its orig-

43. See Francis’ (1969) model of economic growth under conditions of “perfect enclavism,” and Brewster’s (1973) “quantitative interpretation of economic dependence,” which showed the lack of interrelationships in the principal economic functions in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

44. See James (1997, 2002); cited in Nicholls and Boodoo (2003, 272).

45. On the social dimension of this question see especially Benn (1974, 255–58), and Stone (1978, 7).

inators gave priority to the taking of political power as the prerequisite to resolving economic problems.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the statist, self-reliance strategies advocated by the more radical branch of dependency thought attracted considerable criticism. The Marxist left argued that advocacy of nationalization ignored the class character of the state, which would condition the success of nationalization in meeting its objectives.⁴⁸ Mainstream critics questioned whether the policies advocated were economically correct or politically practical. In mineral-export economies the reliance on foreign companies for fiscal revenues meant that the nationalization strategies could become a “wrecking operation” (Lewis 1970). The most telling criticisms were those that compared the success of economies following export-oriented development strategies and orthodox economic management policies to the economic decline of those following the inward-looking, statist strategies favoured by dependency thought. This was held to be the reason for the dramatic contrast in economic performance of Southeast Asia and Barbados vis-à-vis that of Jamaica and Guyana in the 1970s (Stone 1980; Blackman 2003).⁴⁹

Dependency writers offered several explanations for the economic failure of “radical” experiments in the Caribbean. One was to adduce factors outside of government control; that is, political and economic destabilization by forces opposed to reform including the US government’s CIA, the IMF, and the local capitalist class, resulting in capital flight, disinvestment, and the loss of export markets and collapse of tourism.⁵⁰ But much attention was directed at deficiencies in political and economic management by the reformist governments: ideological vacillation and incoherent economic policies in Jamaica, corruption and authoritarian rule in Guyana, and political patronage that undermined the performance of state enterprises in both countries.⁵¹ Thus dependency writers tried to salvage the strategy by critiquing its implementation, while the critics regarded poor implementation as proof that the strategy itself was unsound. By the end of the 1980s, Girvan (1991) was conceding that the real-world experiments based on the prescriptive content of dependency had “generally failed the tests of self-reliant growth and political survival” (2), and Best (1996) was arguing that the strategies deriving from the New World *and* Marxist visions had resulted in “disastrous consequences for the common people” (4). The critics of statist self-reliance could, therefore, find vindication in historical outcomes. However, the lessons to be drawn from the success of the East Asian industrializing economies are themselves a matter of debate. It is also not clear that the neoliberal policies of the Washington Consensus, presented as the alternative to statist self-reliance, were able to live up to the promises of greater success.

C. Decline of Dependency Thought

Unresolved theoretical and methodological issues, problems with the theory of change, and perceived policy failures were the principal factors in the decline of dependency thought by the late 1970s. Leading dependency writers turned their attention to political activity, or accepted governmental roles, or addressed academic topics that branched off from their earlier work,⁵² often influ-

47. Cumper (1974), then head of the Department of Economics at the Mona Campus of the UWI, argued that the dependency school had an academic agenda of closure to the outside world and a political agenda to seize power and establish a totalitarian, authoritarian political order.

48. Dependency writers addressed this issue both explicitly and implicitly in Thomas (1984), Beckford and Witter (1982), and Girvan (1988).

49. Quoted in Best (1996, 34).

50. See Girvan, Bernal, and Hughes (1980).

51. See especially Beckford and Witter (1982), Girvan (1986, 1988), Levitt (2006), and Thomas (1984).

52. Hence, Best involved himself in Trinidad and Tobago politics, Beckford addressed the theme of black dispossession and black affirmation, and Girvan and Jefferson took up governmental appointments in Jamaica.

enced by a neo-Marxist perspective on world capitalism. Younger radical scholars were attracted to classical Marxism, which was offered as a more “scientific” guide to analysis and political practice. Dependency thinking also internationally fell out of favour; it was increasingly judged as less a *theory* of underdevelopment and more a *method for the study* of underdevelopment (Palma 1978).⁵³ Developments in Guyana, Jamaica, and Grenada fed ideological polarization in the Caribbean and associated dependency with economic mismanagement and political authoritarianism. By the 1980s, the international climate had radically changed. Neoliberal economics, embodied in the theory and policies of the Washington Consensus, asserted a claim of universal applicability to all economies. Dependency had grown out of structuralism and development economics, which owed their origins to the belief that developing countries required economic theories tailored to their own circumstances. During the 1980s, this idea was trashed by powerful international organizations and the leading academic centres of the North, which trained a new generation of economists and policy-makers in the new paradigm.

The paradox is that the *actual* dependence of Caribbean economies became much more acute in the era of structural adjustment and globalization of the 1980s and 1990s. Heightened foreign indebtedness and the dismantling of traditional trade preferences have increased the economic vulnerability of Caribbean countries, exposing them to pervasive external intrusions into domestic policy-making in the form of conditionalities imposed by the Washington-based international financial institutions and bilateral donors. The agreement establishing the World Trade Organization in 1994, to which all Caribbean countries are party, extends international trade disciplines to services, intellectual property, and the treatment of foreign corporations, thereby significantly constricting the “policy space” previously available to developing countries. National development of the kind that was the accepted objective in the era of decolonization has been replaced by the mantra of “integration into the global economy.” The new dependency associated with globalization is presented as *interdependence* in the effort to obfuscate its asymmetries. The wheel has come full circle from the 1960s, and there is a new orthodoxy that calls for a renewed critical analysis from an updated dependency perspective.

CONCLUSION: DEPENDENCY’S LEGACY

New World thinking and the plantation school is generally regarded as the most significant development in Caribbean social sciences in the early post-colonial period. Stone (1978) saw it as the phase that followed the initial “colonial” phase of development, in which social science concepts were “nationalized” and which “filled a fundamental vacuum in analysis of the relationship between the dominating imperialist interest and those employed by that interest” (4–5). Greene (1984, 13, 15) classified the main theoretical streams in Caribbean social science as cultural pluralism, plantation, dependency, and Marxism. Bernal, Figueroa, and Witter (1984) placed dependency within the “critical tradition” in Caribbean economic thought, locating it as the stage that followed W. Arthur Lewis’ work on Caribbean industrialization and preceded Marxist political economy. Benn’s (2004, chap. 5) intellectual history of the Caribbean and Sankatsing’s (1989, 87–93) assessment of Caribbean social science also treat dependency as the most significant intellectual development following Lewis. Since

53. Blomström and Hettne (1984, chap. 4) observe that there was “criticism and disintegration” of the dependency school of thought in international academic circles toward the end of the 1970s.

the 1990s, the contribution of leading dependency thinkers has been the subject of several scholarly conferences and publications.⁵⁴

In a longer-term historical perspective, several models have been advanced that could form a framework of interpretation. Benn's (2004) intellectual history of the region treats political ideas as *ideology*, insofar as these ideas "represent evaluative statements about the socio-political environment which seek to defend, criticize, or promote values and interests" (xviii). As such, dependency would be characterized as an *ideology of epistemic and economic decolonization* and of *economic nationalism*. Its emergence in the early post-colonial period responded to the contradiction between the constitutional form of national independence on one hand, and the cultural and economic reality of continuing imperial domination on the other. But which values and interests were served by the new ideology, those of the nation as a whole, of the validating elites, or of the dispossessed black masses? A critical interpretation would argue that dependency was an ideology of the first post-colonial generation of Afro-Caribbean males⁵⁵ intent on taking political power from the "Afro-Saxon" elites who inherited political power from the colonial authorities, and on wresting the levers of economic control from white expatriates. This has certain plausibility, but it tends to belittle a thought system that is generally agreed to have marked a significant advance in the understanding of Caribbean society on its own terms.

Another framework is suggested by the model of intellectual "creolization" proposed by Gordon K. Lewis (1983) in his historical survey of the main currents in Caribbean thought to the end of the 19th century.⁵⁶ For Lewis, thought creolization is a process "whereby [metropolitan] modes of thought were absorbed and assimilated and then reshaped to fit the special and unique requirements of Caribbean society ... [giving] birth to an indigenous collection of ideas that can properly be termed Caribbean *sui generis* (26–27). There can be no doubt that such epistemic adaptation was a conscious objective of the originators of dependency thought. The question would remain of how internal contradictions within Caribbean society impacted and conditioned such adaptation.

Yet another interpretation is to see dependency as an element in a wider global process of counter-hegemonic resistance to Eurocentric thought. Sankatsing (1998) suggests that the consequence of the European maritime and commercial expansion that began in the 15th century was the "peripheralization" of the rest of the world. One consequence was the "globalisation of the local experience in the Occident," which was "derived from the premise that out of the experience of the West all universals for humanity were bound to be born." Eurocentrism's "five abolitions" in the knowledge systems of peripheral societies were the abolition of *context*, *culture*, *evolution*, *internal social dynamism*, and *history*. In this context Sankatsing credits the New World Group with seeking to revalidate these abolished categories: he ranks its work as being among "the most remarkable feats in a search for indigenisation of the social sciences in the region, reluctant to uncritically accept dominant paradigms and theories" (Sankatsing 1998). In his view, the demise of the school led to negative developments in the Caribbean social sciences, including "unwillingness to look for comprehensive explanations of our own reality," "moving away from theory," "blind empiricism," and "even scientific journalism."

54. Refer to Witter and Lindsay (1996), Beckford and Levitt (2000a), Pantin and Mahabir (1998), Ryan (2003a), and the UWI Centre for Caribbean Thought Conference, *Thought of New World: The Quest for Decolonisation*, UWI, Mona, 16–18 June 2005. The George Beckford Chair in Political Economy was also established at the UWI, Mona, after Beckford's death in 1990, and one result was the publication of his selected papers; see Levitt and Witter (1996). The George Beckford Award was also established by the Association of Caribbean Economists.

55. Notably, the ethnic and gender composition of the intellectual leadership of dependency thought was broadly representative of that of the first post-colonial generation of native Caribbean social scientists; that is, the generation of the 1960s.

Viewed in this framework, dependency thought connects with broader intellectual currents in the era of decolonization by which the people of the global South asserted the right to their own interpretation of their history, reality, and vision of the future. In economics, the new subdiscipline of development economics originated from the premise that the economic circumstances of the underdeveloped countries were sufficiently different from those of industrialized economies as to require tailor-made analytical tools and policies.⁵⁷ Recent years have seen a revival of interest in development economics due to disenchantment with the current orthodoxy. In a similar manner, dependency's critical stance and its body of work is a source of intellectual capital in providing alternatives to the universalistic, context-free, ahistorical, asocial, and apolitical neo-classical economics that underpins neoliberal globalization. This updated mission is implicit in the conclusion of Witter and Lindsay (1996):

In the past, critical thought has identified the way in which the Caribbean was integrated into the world economy as principal explanation for the region's poverty and underdevelopment ... The challenge now is to monitor and assess the impact of constant changes in the international economy on the region's development possibilities. Then, on this basis *critical thought must fashion new strategies for active participation in the world economy on terms which are favourable to the region's peoples* (xxvi; emphasis added).

In conclusion, Caribbean dependency thought can be linked to a wider context in time, place, philosophy, and epistemology. It is simultaneously specific and general, local and global, time-bound but part of a historical process, and policy-oriented while springing from a philosophical base. It is part of the oppositional tradition in the sphere of knowledge that has its roots deep within Caribbean society, with its experience of colonialism, slavery, and indentured servitude. It appears as one of various manifestations of resistance in the behavioural, religious, ideological, and philosophical spheres that such an experience engendered among those who were the *objects* of that history but who sought to become the *subjects* of their own history. Dependency thought resonates with other currents of critical and counter-hegemonic thought in the region and in the global South, a "song of freedom" in the metaphor of Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*:

*Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our mind
... Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
That's all I ever ask*

57. On this subject see Myrdal (1957).

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