Race, culture, and history: Charles Wagley and the anthropology of the African Diaspora in the Americas

Raça, cultura e história: Charles Wagley e a antropologia da diáspora africana nas Américas

Fred Hay

Appalachian State University. Boone, North Carolina, USA

Abstract: When I came to the University of Florida in 1981, I was informed that Charles Wagley was not accepting new graduate students. After my first class with Wagley, he agreed to be my advisor and mentor and I became the last student he accepted. Though better known for his sensitive and pioneering ethnography of indigenous and peasant populations and his influential anthropological/historical overviews of Brazil and Latin America, Wagley and his students' contributions to the study of Afro-American cultures and race relations in the Americas are considerable. Among the important concepts that Wagley articulated were 'social race', 'Plantation America', and the 'amorphous and weakly organized local community without clear boundaries in space or membership'. Wagley guided my dissertation research in Haiti. In it I developed his concept by proposing 'cultural amorphousness' as a 'total cultural style' (following Kroeber) of African Diaspora cultures in the Plantation American cultural sphere: a primary organizing principle that has proved to be an effective adaptation to plantation and its successor societies.

Keywords: African Diaspora. Afro-America. Plantation America. Race relations.

Resumo: Quando cheguei à Universidade da Flórida, em 1981, fui informado de que Charles Wagley não estava aceitando novos estudantes de pós-graduação. Após minha primeira aula com Wagley, ele concordou em ser meu orientador e me tornei o último estudante que aceitou. Apesar de ser mais conhecido por sua sensível e pioneira etnografia das populações indígenas e camponesas, e por seus influentes panoramas antropológicos/históricos do Brasil e da América Latina, são consideráveis as contribuições de Wagley e de seus estudantes para o estudo das culturas afro-americanas e das relações raciais nas Américas. Entre os importantes conceitos articulados por Wagley, estão os de 'raça social', 'Plantation America' e 'comunidades locais amorfas e fracamente organizadas, sem limites claros no espaço ou pertencimento'. Wagley orientou minha pesquisa de doutorado no Haiti, na qual desenvolvi o seu conceito, propondo o de 'amorfismo cultural' enquanto 'estilo cultural global' (conforme Kroeber) das culturas da diáspora africana na esfera cultural da *Plantation America*: um princípio organizador fundamental que provou ser uma adaptação efetiva à *plantation* e às suas sociedades sucessoras.

Palavras-chave: Diáspora africana. Afro-América. Plantation America. Relações raciais.

The hope that multicultural understanding will end, or at least curtail, the divisiveness of racism has led to a resurgence in the study of race relations and ethnicity. Anthropology, by its nature, has long been concerned with these issues. One of the pioneers in the development of the study of race relations was the late Charles Wagley. Though better known for his sensitive and pioneering ethnography of indigenous populations of the Amazon and Guatemala and the Amazonian peasant populations of Brazil known as *caboclos*[1], he and his students also made significant contributions to the study of Afro-American cultures and race relations in the Americas. In a series of influential anthropological/historical overviews of Brazil and Latin America, Wagley articulated the concepts of 'social race', 'Plantation America', and the 'amorphous and weakly organized local community without clear boundaries in space or membership'.

During the course of his career, Wagley's views regarding race relations evolved from assimilationism to an acceptance of multiculturalism. This change can be explained in part by historical changes in race relations in the United States. Wagley's earlier experiences in Brazil had given him reason for hoping that race relations elsewhere could also be more humane, cooperative and self-consciously transcultural. That even in the United States, a national culture which incorporated, respected and cherished aspects of the cultures of all its inhabitants might evolve. This philosophy fit well with that of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) and other leading civil rights organizations of post-World War II America. Wagley's views agreed also with those progressive scholars of the assimilationist school such as his friend, African-American sociologist and Fisk University president, Charles S. Johnson.

The riots of the 1960s and the re-emergence of a militant black nationalism had a major and lasting impact on the scholarly discourse on race relations and African-American culture. Wagley's move away from a more naive assimilationist theory to one that recognizes the reality and even desirability of multiculturalism is an early adoption, by a distinguished white scholar, of a position that would find increasing support within the establishment academy over the next two decades.

In the 1930s and 1940s as Wagley became increasingly involved in the study of Brazilian national culture, his interest in Afro-Brazil grew. This is evident in his discussion of African cultural influences in his 1948 'social forces' article, "Regionalism and cultural unity in Brazil" (Wagley, 1948a), and his chapter on Brazil in Ralph Linton's 1949 collection, "Most of the world: the Peoples of Africa, Latin America and the East today" (Wagley, 1949)[2]. In the latter work, Wagley stated a theme which remained central to his, and to his student Marvin Harris's, work on race and race relations: "Miscegenation always takes place between racial groups inhabiting the same region, no matter how great may be the antagonism between them" (Wagley, 1949, p. 223)[3]. This interest led to new research on Afro-Brazil in the Columbia University-State of Bahia

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[1] Richard Pace (1997), who restudied Gurupá (subject of Wagley's "Amazon Town"), has described *caboclo* as a racist term.
[2] Wagley's early statements on Afro-Brazil and Brazilian race relations were greatly influenced by two historical works, Frank Tannenbaum's "Slave and citizen: the Negro in the Americas" (1946) and Gilberto Freyre's "Casa-Grande & Senzala" (1938). Wagley wrote of the latter (translated by Samuel Putnam as "The masters and the slaves"), "It is a great book, one of the greatest to appear in Latin America during our century... Freyre has had the courage, coupled with considerable erudition in the social sciences, not to respect the 'lines' between the various disciplines. His field research is rich and colorful and he has immersed himself in the material" (Wagley, 1946, p. 626-627). In 1979, while expressing certain reservations about "The masters and the slaves" (Freyre, 1946), Wagley referred to it as "brilliant and idiosyncratic" and wrote that "More than anyone else, Freyre opened the door to modern anthropology in Brazil" (Wagley, 1979, p. 7).
[3] Harris was more adamant: "It is time that grown men stopped talking about racially prejudiced sexuality. In general, when human beings have the power, the opportunity and the need, they will mate with members of the opposite sex regardless of color or the identity of grandfather" (Harris, 1974 [1964], p. 68-69).

study which commenced in 1950 under the joint direction of Thales de Azevedo, Luis A. Costa Pinto and Charles Wagley (Wagley *et al*., 1950). Alfred Métraux of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approached the Columbia-Bahia project about the possibility of focusing part of the research on race relations. Thus, the Columbia-Bahia project became part of UNESCO's larger study of race relations in Brazil[4]. The Columbia-Bahia project was conceived as a Brazilian version of the group research on regional culture as realized in Julian Steward's Puerto Rican project (Steward *et al*., 1956). Like the Puerto Rico research, Wagley and his Columbia graduate students picked representative communities from the different rural, ecological/exploitation zones in the state of Bahia.

Three Columbia University graduate students participated in this phase of the Columbia-Bahia project. In 1950-1951, Marvin Harris studied a community in the mountain region of Central Brazil, Harry Hutchinson did the same for the traditional sugar cane plantation zone on the coast, and Ben Zimmerman studied the impoverished arid Sertão. As with the Puerto Rico project, these student's community studies served as their doctoral dissertations. In two cases, versions of these dissertations were later published: Harris's "Town and Country in Brazil" (1956) and Hutchinson's "Village and Plantation Life in Northeastern Brazil" (1957).

"Race and class in rural Brazil" (Wagley, 1952a)[5] was published in 1952 and included chapters by Harris, Hutchinson and Zimmerman on race relations in their Bahian fieldwork communities and one by Wagley on race relations in the Amazonian community of 'Itá' (Gurupá). The Gurupá research had been conducted earlier between 1942 and 1948, and was the basis for Wagley's ethnography "Amazon Town: a study of Man in the Tropics" (1953). In the concluding chapter of "Race and class", "From caste to class in Northern Brazil", Wagley summarizes the primary findings of the Bahian race relations research.

Though there were differences in the ideology and organization of race relations in each community there were also similarities, the result of a common national history. The Portuguese colony of Brazil was originally a two caste society: the European caste and the indigenous caste[6]. To the latter were soon added imported Africans. Intermediate physical types developed through miscegenation. Attempts were made to classify and label all varieties and degrees of intermixture; remnants of which still exist in Brazil and have been the subject of intensive study by Marvin Harris, Wagley's son-in-law Conrad Kottak (Harris, 1970; Harris and Kottak, 1963) and others. The caste system evolved into a class system where physical, racial appearance was only one among the criteria used to establish an individual's class. Other status indicators included wealth, occupation, education and family background. While the upper classes

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[4] Subsequent publications from the UNESCO project include: L. A. Costa Pinto, "O negro no Rio de Janeiro" (1953); Thales de Azevedo, "Les élites de couleur dans une ville brésilienne" (1953); Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes (Eds.), "Relações raciais entre pretos e brancos em São Paulo" (1955); and René Ribeiro, "Religião e relações raciais" (1956). According to Roger Bastide, the Brazilian race relations research project was originally conceived of by UNESCO's Director of the Division of the Social Sciences, Brazilian anthropologist Arthur Ramos. Bastide referred to "Race and class in rural Brazil" as "the essential starting point for any understanding of the racial situation in Brazil" (Bastide, 1957, p. 497).

[5] Wagley's article, "Race relations in Brazil: attitudes in the backlands" (Wagley, 1952b), is also based on this research.

[6] It should be noted that Wagley's use of the term 'caste' is not the same as used for the specific situation in India but rather the controversial adoption (and generic usage) of the term to describe race relations in the United States. Anthropologist Lloyd Warner and his students, including St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton (authors of "Black Metropolis: a study of Negro life in a Northern City" [1945]), Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner and Mary R. Gardner ("Deep South: a social anthropology of caste and class" [1941]), and W. Lloyd Warner, Buford H. Junker, and Walter A. Adams ("Color and human nature: Negro personality development in a Northern City" [1941]) as well as psychologist John Dollard ("Caste and class in a Southern Town" [1938]) applied the term 'caste' in their analysis of American society in the 1930s. Gunnar Myrdal promoted this use of the term in his influential "An American dilemma: the Negro problem and modern democracy" published in 1944, a work that Wagley and Harris referred to as a "masterful study" (Wagley and Harris, 1958, p. 119). The caste controversy was something of a tempest in a teapot: a lot of noise over a non-issue.

were predominantly Caucasian in appearance and the majority of darker skinned people were in the lower classes, many cases of dark skinned individuals improving their class status and of whites sinking in the class hierarchy existed. Racial appearance was more important as criteria of relative status for distinguishing levels in the upper classes and of less importance as criteria for the lower classes. Segregation as it was practiced in the United States and South Africa was virtually unknown.

This is not to say that racial prejudice did not exist in Brazil. It was pervasive but of a milder variety than found in most former European colonies. Wagley's fear, expressed in his conclusion, was that as Brazil accepted more and more of western industrial culture that western style racism would become more prevalent in Brazil. Today, in those Brazilian urban areas most affected by modernization, this does seem to be the case. There has also been a concomitant growth in organizations promoting black political and social solidarity and activism (Nascimento, 1980; Fiola, 1990; Winant, 1992). In recent years, the controversy surrounding new attempts to create castes in Brazil has been addressed by Marvin Harris and others (e.g., Harris *et al*., 1993). As late as 1979, however, Wagley felt he could still claim that Brazilians were "proud of their racial democracy with its assimilation of people of different races and tolerance of phenotypical differences" (Wagley, 1979, p. 1). Raised in severely racist eastern Texas in the early decades of the 20th century, Wagley found comfort and hope in the Brazilian situation. It is no wonder that the great Brazilian novelist, Jorge Amado (1971), based his "Tent of miracles" character, James D. Levenson – a North American anthropologist, and expert and admirer of Afro-Bahian culture – on Wagley.

Wagley characterized the Brazilian racial situation in "Race and class in rural Brazil" as one of 'social race' rather than biological race. He elaborated this concept with ethnographic material from other areas of the Western Hemisphere in his 1959 paper, "On the concept of social race in the Americas". In this paper, Wagley's point of view is that "the way people are classified in such social races in a multi-racial society tells us in itself much about the relations between such groups. More specifically, the criteria for defining social races differ from region to region in the Americas" (Wagley, 1965, p. 531-532)[7]. Wagley defined three social race regions for the Western Hemisphere and they are, in turn, characterized by the primacy of one of three criteria – ancestry, physical appearance and sociocultural status – used for racial classification.

The United States stood apart from the rest of the Americas in making use of ancestry as the primary classificatory criteria. In the United States, you were either white or black. An individual was black, regardless of physical appearance or sociocultural status, if there was any known biological link, no matter how distant in time or genetics, to another black person. It is this use of ancestry as the primary classificatory criteria that encouraged the development of the caste-like groups separated by a legislated segregation, that have markedly different access to goods, education and justice.

In Indo-America, people were classified primarily by their social and cultural status. Physical appearance and ancestry were important only to the small group of aristocratic families that claimed pure European descent. For the majority the distinction between Indian and mestizo was based on cultural attributes: language, costume, community membership and self-identification. An individual or community who acquired the trappings of mestizo culture was considered by others mestizo. As in the U.S., discrimination against the minority group existed in Indo-America. Unlike the U.S., mobility between groups was possible. In the years since Wagley's death the perception of racial classification and identity in the

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[7] "The concepts of social race held in both Indo-America and Afro-America can only increase the gene flow from one segment of the population to another and the panmictic nature of total national populations" (Wagley, 1971, p. 36).

U.S. has continued to evolve in uniquely North American ways (Hay, 2001).

Physical appearance was the principle means of classifying people in Brazil and the Caribbean. In both, miscegenation was most common and except for a small elite who claimed pure European descent as was the case for Indo-America; ancestry was not a classificatory concern. Elaborate schemes for classifying persons by phenotype evolved, however, these types do not in themselves form social groups. The important social groups in the Caribbean and Brazil are socio-economic classes. As described earlier for the Bahia race relations research, social race was only one of several criteria by which people were assigned class status. There was, in these areas, a tendency to change an individual's social race to fit his or her class ranking. Thus a rich, well-educated black man would somehow be whiter than his poor, uneducated brother of identical physical features[8].

Wagley concluded his paper by reminding us that none of these racial classifications had any genetic validity and that all "such racial terms have become entangled with social and cultural meaning and they remain as symbols out of the past of slavery, peonage, and cultural differences to plague a large segment of our American people" (Wagley, 1965, p. 543). In 1971, Wagley added the following advice: "it must be warned that concepts of social race are not static; they have changed radically in the Americas since the early colonial period and they will change in the future as the societies and cultures, of which they are but one aspect, change" (Wagley, 1971, p. 37)[9].

Wagley's study of social race was expanded into a study of American minorities in general. In "Minorities in the New World: six case studies" (1958), Wagley and Marvin Harris present their UNESCO-commissioned synthesis of the literature on the anthropology of minorities. They describe and compare six case studies: Indians in Brazil and Mexico, blacks in Martinique and the United States, French Canadians and U.S. Jews[10].

In their analysis of Martinique and U.S. minority-majority relations, the authors describe a post-emancipation situation where those aspects of African culture which survived slavery – music, dance, religious cults, folklore – did not "influence the course of events in any substantial way or determine the relations between Negroes and whites" (Wagley and Harris, 1958, p. 269). Their slave culture "provided them with little preparation for engaging in the competitive struggle" of the majority economic system. They could enter national life only "as humble laborers or servants at the bottom of the social hierarchy" (Wagley and Harris, 1958, p. 269). The respective histories blacks in the U.S. and of U.S. and Martinique diverged after emancipation. In Martinique there was a gradual move toward social and biological assimilation while in the U.S. prolonged violence, legal segregation and increased hostility occurred between

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[8]   Brazilian anthropologist and former Wagley student, George Zarur believes that this particular observation was original to Wagley and that it was a "beautiful insight" into Brazilian culture (George de Cerqueira Leite Zarur, personal communication, 1992).

[9]   "In Afro-America, when people of Negro phenotype become educated and rich (if they do) and enter into the middle class in larger numbers, social race will become less important in the selection of marriage partners. As laws against 'mixed marriages' are abrogated in the United States and as people classed as Negroes improve their economic condition, will the two caste-like groups called 'Negro' and 'white' merge into one hybrid population? Or, will the ideological position, now taken by many whites and Negroes alike, that each group should maintain its social identity, lead to a new emphasis upon endogamy and a greater heterogamy of the population. The diversity and hybrid nature of the American populations will continue with increasing velocity" (Wagley, 1971, p. 37).

[10]   Ruth Landes, who like Wagley was a student of both Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, wrote that "Minorities" was a "bland readable textbook". She conceded, however, that it was "probably the first on minorities to be issued as anthropology" (Landes, 1959, p. 690). It is not clear what Wagley's relationship to Landes was or what role he played, if any, in the discussion of her fieldwork and behavior in Brazil. Herskovits and Arthur Ramos accused Landes of certain improprieties and the controversy had a negative impact on her career. Wagley did tell the author that every time he saw Herskovits, Herskovits would ask him about the current activities of "that woman" as if Wagley had some sort of responsibility for her. Wagley suggested that this might have been because they had both been Benedict's students and had been active in Brazil at about the same time. Landes' 1947 ethnography, "The City of Women", was based on her research, mostly in Bahia, in 1938 and 1939.

minority and majority groups. Throughout "Minorities in the New World", Harris and Wagley extoll the positive results of assimilation over that of pluralism[11].

In 1960, in response to M. G. Smith's paper "Social and cultural pluralism", Wagley stated that with a few exceptions – countries like Trinidad with a large Asian population – the concept of pluralism was not useful for the Caribbean. He accuses Smith of ignoring history, of failing to realize that the countries of the Caribbean, like Brazil and the United States, had already passed through the plural society stage to that of the "state-society with ethnic minorities" (Wagley, 1960, p. 779). Wagley stated that when the culturally distinct groups making up a plural society

> lose their cultural distinctiveness and are merely set off from the other segments of the population by symbols of group unity, by differences of socioeconomic status, or by phenotypical appearance, the state-society is no longer a plural society, although it is a state-society containing minority groups and/or social classes (Wagley, 1960, p. 779).

In "Plantation America: a cultural sphere", Wagley (1957a) synthesized the literature on plantation society, slavery and Afro-American cultures[12]. He described what he found as a "magnificent laboratory of the comparative approach" and a culture area in which we could use the "comparative method to help us build a science of society and culture" (Wagley, 1957a, p. 12)[13]. Wagley divided the Western Hemisphere into three cultural spheres: Euro-America, Indo-America and Plantation America. Euro-America covers the northern and southern areas of the hemisphere and is predominantly Caucasoid ethnically and European culturally.

Indo-America, "the region from Mexico to northern Chile, along the Andean Cordilleras", is populated by Indians and mestizos and is the area in which the Amerindian past has contributed the most to contemporary cultures[14]. The Plantation American cultural sphere extends spatially from about midway up the coast of Brazil into the Guianas, along the Caribbean coast, throughout the Caribbean itself, and into the United States. It is characteristically coastal; not until the nineteenth century did the way of life of the plantation culture sphere penetrate far into mainland interior, and then only in Brazil and the United States. This area has an environment which is characteristically tropical (except in the southern United States) and lowland (Wagley, 1957a, p. 5).

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[11] Wagley's 1957 article, "The situation of the Negro in the United States" (Wagley, 1957b), published in the International Social Science Bulletin, is derived from the Chapter "The Negro in the United States", in Wagley and Harris (1957).

[12] Melville J. Herskovits and E. Franklin Frazier, whose disagreements are well-known, agreed, however, that Afro-America was a more appropriate term than Plantation America. Frazier, in the Introduction to "Caribbean studies: a symposium" (Rubin, 1957) wrote: "Since the other culture spheres are described in ethnic terms as 'Euro-America' and 'Indo-America', the reader may ask why 'Plantation America' was not designated 'Negro-America'. In this area [by which Frazier means the Caribbean proper and not the entire area described by Wagley], the Negro has been the chief ethnic or racial group and has been the main influence in its culture. Moreover, even if one accepts the position that man's adaptation to the tropics is cultural rather than biological, the future of the tropics, it appears, belongs to the Negro or non-European races" (Frazier, 1957, p. V). Herskovits, in his paper "The ahistorical approach to Afroamerican studies: a critique", accused Wagley of inconsistencies in the classification of New World cultures: "What is significant in this refusal to consider an African component in the formation of these cultures is the demonstration it gives of how a mode of thinking that derives from a survival in our scientific methodology can becloud the processes of logical thought. Consider these three categories: in the broad sense, two are historical and cultural – Euro-America, Indo-America. The third class, however, violates a fundamental principle in that it shifts the basis of classification. Were the first two categories called 'urban' or 'industrial', for example, the classes would lie on the same phenomenological plane as the concept 'plantation'" (Herskovits, 1960, p. 562). Wagley agreed with Frazier and Herskovits' criticisms about the use of the term 'plantation' rather than an ethnic indicator. Why Wagley chose to use the term 'plantation' (other than that it was a popular subject of discussion in social science circles at that time) is unknown. It is interesting to note that both before (Wagley, 1955) and after (Wagley, 1971) the symposium in which he proposed the term 'Plantation America', Wagley had used the term 'Afro-America' for this cultural sphere. Wagley confided to the author in 1983, that regardless of Herskovits' criticisms, he did not understand why Herskovits had labeled his work "ahistorical"; that he had always considered his work historical.

[13] The metaphor of the 'laboratory' was often used for the social scientific study of Afro-America. Herskovits used the term frequently and it was even used in the popular press (e.g., Herskovits, 1966; Bilden, 1929).

[14] Wagley's involvement with the founding of area studies programs in U.S. universities goes back to the mid-1940s (see Wagley, 1948b). In "Plantation America", Wagley outlined the area which was to become Afro-America.

Wagley considered the following to be the basic features of the Plantation America cultural sphere: 1) plantation system and monocrop agriculture; 2) rigid class lines; 3) multi-racial composition; 4) weak community structures; 5) Afro-American peasantry; and 6) prevalence of the matrifocal family. In addition to these primary features, Wagley identified a number of secondary characteristics; there are a series of cultural characteristics common to Plantation America which derive often from similarities in environment, often from the common historical background, and often from the presence of such a large population of African origin (Wagley, 1957a, p. 9).

Wagley proposed the following as the common secondary characteristics of Plantation America: 1) similarity of food crops; 2) slash and burn horticulture; 3) local markets and women marketeers; 4) commonalities in cuisine; 5) basic features in musical patterning; 6) African derived folklore; 7) Afro-American religious cults; 8) "a series of traditions and values" which include the special stereotypical roles of "mammy", "the black uncle", "the young gentleman" and others (Wagley, 1957a, p. 9-11). This is, Wagley admits, an incomplete list but it "should be enough to indicate that we are dealing with a particular species, so to speak, of contemporary society which has taken form in the New World" (Wagley, 1957a, p. 11).

In conclusion to this essay, Wagley (1957a, p. 11) observes:

> It is, of course, a fact that there are important differences between the southern United States, the Caribbean islands of Spanish, French, Dutch, and English colonial backgrounds, and northern Brazil. Detailed local studies are obviously necessary and will provide the only basis for understanding the distinctive societies and cultures within this larger culture sphere. Yet, our local studies must be seen in relationship to this larger sphere which historically, and in the present, shares certain basic institutions and cultural patterns[15].

The following year, Wagley examined the literature on the local community in the Caribbean and described it in terms of the larger Plantation America culture sphere. At the University of Florida's Ninth Annual Conference on the Caribbean in 1958, Wagley presented his little-known paper, "Recent studies of Caribbean local societies" (Wagley, 1959b). I say little-known, in spite of the fact that Harris quotes it in his landmark "Patterns of race in the Americas" (1974), because it has been otherwise overlooked. It even escaped inclusion in the 1980s version of Wagley's complete *curriculum vitae*.

In this short paper, Wagley synthesizes the ethnographic data found in the available community studies done for the Caribbean area. He remarks on the many differences between communities in the former English, French, Spanish and Dutch colonies. He also observes that certain qualities are common to most Caribbean local communities. Included among these shared traits are the predominance of weak and unstable families and the "amorphous and weakly organized local community without clear boundaries in space or membership" (Wagley, 1959b, p. 198). Wagley interprets the amorphous Caribbean community as the "result of slavery and a plantation economy" (Wagley, 1959b, p. 199). Some of Wagley's students have explored the concept of the amorphous Afro-American community in more depth. Zarur (1975) used the concept in his comparison of local communities in Brazil and the southern United States. I found evidence for amorphousness as a primary organizing principle of Afro-American cultures (Hay, 1985)[16]. 'Cultural

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[15] Wagley and Harris (1955) in their article, "A typology of Latin American subcultures", defined two stages for the evolution of the plantation as settlement and social institution: the *engenho* and *usina* types, both based on the development of sugar cane plantations over time.

[16] See also Fred J. Hay, "'Cultural Amorphousness': human adaptation in Plantation America", paper presented at the American Anthropological Association in the session "Race, class and ethnicity in comparative perspective: the legacy of Charles Wagley", San Francisco, 1992.

amorphousness' has proved to be an effective adaptation to plantation and its successor societies.

When I came to the University of Florida in 1981, I was informed that Charles Wagley was not accepting new graduate students. After my first class with Wagley, he agreed to be my advisor and mentor and I became the last student he accepted. Under Wagley's direction, I studied a community in Haiti and discovered that this amorphous quality permeated all aspects of community life. I reviewed the elastic family, household and other aspects of culture and society in the village of Plage-Boutou and found 'cultural amorphousness' as the primary organizing principle of local society and culture (Hay, 1985). 'Cultural amorphousness' – itself a legacy of plantation life – allows for stability or rapid change as the circumstances demand. It has evolved as an individual and a group adaptive strategy in Afro-American cultures. Structures and forms appear amorphous and ever-changing but they vary in accordance with a deeper and often unconscious set of values at what Mintz and Price (1973) labeled, in speaking of African survivals, the "grammatical level" and that Aschenbrenner (1976) has described as the "Humanism" of black culture.

This characteristic of amorphousness has been observed by others: Aschenbrenner's "open, dynamic character" of family in Illinois (1976, p. 344), Rodman's "lower-class value stretch" in Trinidad (1963), Rubenstein's "permissiveness" and "replaceability" in Saint Vincent (1987), Comitas's "occupational multiplicity" in Jamaica (1973), Harris' "referential ambiguity" in the racial calculus of Brazil (1970) or Wagley's concept of "social race" (1959a), Reisman's "cultural and linguistic ambiguity" in Antigua (1970), Karen Brown's "flexible and shifting cosmologies" of Haitian market women (1992, p. 75), Bourguignon's "receptivity" of Haitian culture (1952, p. 318), Whitten's "adaptive mobility" of blacks in Hispanic America (1970), Herskovits' "socialized ambivalence" in Haitian personality

(1971, p. 299-300), and Woofter's "experimental" nature of society on the South Carolina sea island St. Helena (1930).

Listed above are just a few of many examples available illustrating of the presence of 'Cultural amorphousness' throughout Afro-America. 'Cultural amorphousness' is such a generalized organizing principle of Afro-American culture and society that it fits well with that rather amorphous construct that Kroeber (1963, p. 152) called "total-culture style":

> Since human culture cannot be wholly concerned with values, having also to adapt to social (interpersonal) relations and to reality (survival situations), the totality of a culture can scarcely be considered outright as a sort of expanded style. But it's contained styles, impinging on the rest of culture, can influence this; and all parts of a culture will tend to accommodate somewhat to one another; so that the whole may come to be pervaded with a common quality and to possess a fairly high degree of congruence. For want of a better term I have called this the whole-culture or total-culture style.

Following Kroeber, I proposed 'Cultural amorphousness' as the "total-culture style" of the African Diaspora of the Americas.

In the 1960s, Wagley taught a course on Afro-American anthropology at Columbia University. He gave up the course only after outside political activists interrupted classes in the heyday of campus activism toward the end of the decade[17]. During his term as Director of Columbia University's Institute of Latin American Studies (1961-1969), the Institute sponsored a number of important research projects in the Caribbean, including those of Sidney Greenfield (1966) in Barbados and Michael Horowitz (1967) in Martinique.

After moving to the University of Florida in 1971, Wagley tried unsuccessfully to organize a team of social scientists to restudy Indianola Mississippi. This site was described by Dollard in "Caste and class in a Southern Town" (1938) and by Powdermaker in "After freedom:

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[17] Wagley suggested to his colleague and former student, black anthropologist Elliot Skinner, that he take over the class on Afro-American anthropology. Skinner succeeded Wagley as Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University.

a cultural study in the Deep South" (1939). Wagley also joined with Solon Kimball in directing a team of graduate students in a study of the effects on school integration on black and white communities in north Florida. Wagley and Kimball (1974) summarized their major findings in "Race and culture in school and community" as:

1) Bi-racial parallelism: "The voluntary clustering of students on the basis of racial identification is a persistent and universal phenomenon" (Kimball and Wagley, 1974, p. 180);

2) Natural groupings: "What has been surprising to us (...) has been the striking contrast in organization and other aspects which characterize the informal group pattern of blacks when compared to whites" (Kimball and Wagley, 1974, p. 182). Wagley and Kimball were especially impressed by the black group's "different internal structuring", and their "far greater capacity to coalesce into larger units or divide into smaller ones" (Kimball and Wagley, 1974, p. 182). This description is in many ways similar to Wagley's earlier version of the amorphous Caribbean community;

3) Residential-locality setting: the pattern of behavior expected in the school setting is, to a large extent, a reflection of the cultural setting from which they came.

The authors conclude their study by stating: "From this perspective, desegregation although considered to be a victory for advancing the cause of the blacks, turns out to be, in effect, an imperialistic assault upon the kin based folk culture of blacks (and some whites)" (Kimball and Wagley, 1974, p. 186). Thus, we see Wagley moving away from a totally assimilationist perspective to one that is more pluralistic.

To recap, Wagley's primary contributions to Afro-American anthropology are: 1) the development of a comparative anthropology of race relations and majority-minority relations; 2) the concept of 'social race'; 3) the concept of 'Plantation America'; 4) the description of the amorphous Caribbean community; 5) a progression from an assimilationist ideal to a more pragmatic acceptance of multiculturalism and pluralism while not giving-up resistance to the evils of racism and classism on all fronts[18]; 6) and the training of several generations of graduate students who have carried on his work in the anthropology of the African Diaspora, including Marvin Harris, Sidney Greenfield, Maxine Margolis, Harry Hutchinson, Michael Horowitz, Diana Brown, Shepard Forman, Elliot Skinner, and myself.

In December 1992, at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in San Francisco, thirteen of Wagley's former students participated in the session "Race, class and ethnicity in comparative perspective: the legacy of Charles Wagley", organized by former Wagley students Richard Pace and Sidney Greenfield[19]. The social meanings of ethnicity and the realities of ethnic relations were emphasized by most of the speakers. The discussants, Alexander Moore, Sydel Silverman and Marvin Harris each made a call for the revival and continuation of Wagley's work on ethnicity and race. Harris, in particular, emphasized the urgency of this call and condemned those in anthropology who would avoid these issues on the grounds that anthropology lacks the ability to examine or describe culture objectively. Harris stated that if anthropology abdicates its responsibility to strive for objectivity then it will lose its right to exist as a discipline. Wagley and his students made great progress toward the description and appreciation of Afro-America and its relation to the other spheres of cultural influence in the Western Hemisphere. It is upon such work that a fully developed anthropology of the African Diaspora will be founded.

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[18] Wagley was very much in the Boas/Benedict tradition of antiracism and anti-classism. He stated bluntly in this 1955 essay "Race and class barriers in the Americas": out of the varied racial and cultural backgrounds of the people of the Americas has arisen a strong impediment to these ideals of equality of opportunity for all men, namely racial prejudice and discrimination. Out of distinctions between men based on economic and social station at birth has arisen another barrier, namely limitation of opportunity due to socioeconomic class. These two barriers to freedom in the larger sense have been felt with different intensity and in distinct ways in the different nations of the Americas, but they are factors present since 1500 which have hindered the full realization of our American ideal (Wagley, 1955, p. 17).

[19] The Chair was Elliot Skinner. Papers were given by Conrad Kottak, Robert Shirley, Sidney Greenfield, Diana Brown, Maxine Margolis, George Zarur (in absentia), Kenneth Good, Richard Pace, and Fred Hay.

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