

THE COMPOSITION AND
DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC
GROUPS IN BELIZE:

Immigration and Emigration Patterns, 1980–1991*

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In the history of human migration, rarely has a situation arisen in which simultaneous voluntary immigration and emigration flows have dramatically transformed the ethnic composition of an independent country. Belize since its independence in 1981 provides an example of such an unusual combination of circumstances. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, anecdotal evidence began to accumulate suggesting that the country's population was undergoing profound structural changes that included realignment of its settlement patterns and alteration of its ethnic mix.

Normally, changes in the total populations of developing countries result from natural increases (births minus deaths) and net migration (immigration minus emigration), with natural increases being the dominant effect. In Belize during the 1980s, however, net migration (the difference between the number of emigrants and immigrants) was the major factor responsible for both population growth and demographic changes.

Several analysts argued that the selective emigration of large numbers of English-speaking Afro-Belizeans (creoles and Garifuna) to the United States and their replacement by Spanish-speaking immigrants (mestizos and Amerindians) from troubled neighboring countries in Central America were altering the ethnic composition and spatial distribution

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of the country's population (Everitt 1984a; Palacio 1988; Parvenu 1986; Stone 1990; Vernon 1988, 1990). In attempting to assess the socioeconomic implications of the perceived demographic changes, several ad hoc estimates of immigration and emigration rates were made based on scanty empirical evidence (Vernon 1990; Stone 1990).

Data published in the 1991 Census of Belize and the 1990 U.S. Census of Population have confirmed earlier observations that the ethnic mix of Belize was undergoing significant changes. These data substantiated that large numbers of Afro-Belizeans had been emigrating to the United States and were being replaced numerically in Belize by Spanish-speakers from Central America (mainly Guatemalans and El Salvadorans), resulting in a "Latinization" of Belize's population. The share of the national population classified as Afro-Belizean dropped from nearly 48 percent in 1980 to 36 percent in 1991, while the mestizo population increased from 33 percent to 44 percent. The Maya-Q'eqchi' population rose slightly from 10 to 11 percent, while the Garifuna population dropped from 8 to 7 percent. Those categorized as "other" (East Indians, Mennonites, whites, and those who responded "other" or did not respond) dropped slightly from 10 to 9 percent.

In addition, data from the 1991 Belize census indicated that these different migration patterns had affected the spatial distribution of the country's population. Between 1970 and 1991, the proportion of population classified as urban had fallen from 54 percent to 48 percent. This pattern of demographic change runs counter to patterns for most developing countries, where urbanization (especially the growth of major urban centers) has been viewed as a problem and the pace of rural-urban migration has been construed as "excessive" (Krugman 1995, 1; Hamilton and Chinchilla 1991, 88, 92–93). Between 1980 and 1991, only Belize District experienced an increase in the urbanization of its population. In all other districts, the share of population classed as urban remained constant (as in Toledo District) or declined (see Woods, Perry, Steagall, and Cossman 1995).

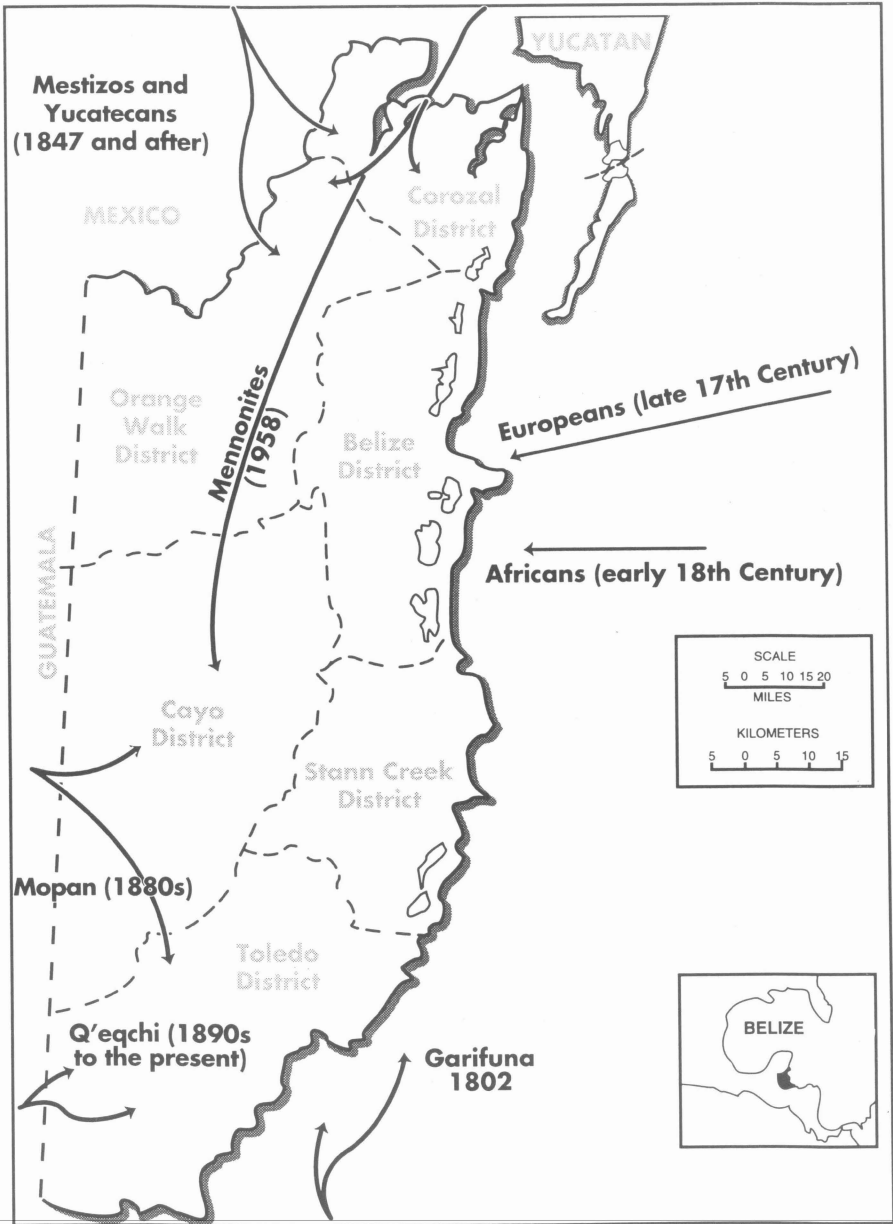
This article will estimate the magnitude and patterns of population change in Belize between 1980 and 1991, relying on Belizean census data. The first section will identify the major ethnic groups in Belize and their traditional locational patterns. The second portion will describe the changes in the country's ethnic mix and changing spatial distributions. The third part will review the processes that have fostered these realignments, identifying and estimating the magnitude of association between major ethnic groups and their geographical distributions. The final section will consider the potential spatial and political implications of the demographic changes that have taken place in Belize in recent years.

Belizean Background

Formerly known as British Honduras, Belize gained independence from Great Britain in 1981, after more than a century of colonial status. As was true of many colonial countries, the spatial distribution of Belize's population was strongly influenced by colonial administrative policies. These policies shaped the social, economic, cultural, and political currents that resulted in the primacy of the settlement at Belize City, the cultural and political dominance of Afro-Belizeans, and the spatial distribution of economic activities and population, including the localization of the country's major ethnic groups (Jefferson 1939; Bolland 1986; Everitt 1986; Shoman 1987, 1994). The degree of Belize City's historic primacy has been described aptly by Assad Shoman: "Belize City came to contain over a third of the population and played a dominant role in the life of the colony. . . . The rest of the country, called the 'out-districts' or simply 'the districts,' was regarded as a sort of back woods area to be avoided at all costs" (Shoman 1987, 9). Despite the creation of the "new capital city" of Belmopan in Cayo District in 1970 and the removal of numerous governmental functions to the new capital, the social and economic primacy of Belize City has remained unchallenged (Everitt 1984b; Davis 1991). The Central Bank and the Supreme Court remain in Belize City, and the various ministries of the government of Belize maintain offices in Belize City, where each minister conducts business regularly one day a week.

Nigel Bolland indicated that the current distribution of Belize's ethnic groups has been conditioned largely by their historic patterns of settlement within the country according to the time and place of their ancestors' original entry into the country (1986, 44; 1988, 196). This observation implies that a significant amount of spatial inertia has underlain internal migration within Belize (Rodgers 1952). Allan Rodgers has defined inertia in a spatial context as a tendency for an existing distribution to persist over time, despite changing socioeconomic conditions. Figure 1 summarizes these historic processes. Shoman has emphasized the various influences of colonial administrative policies in structuring the current distribution of Belize's ethnic groups. He contends that colonial policies promoted spatial isolation of ethnic groups and fostered ethnic-based regional economic specializations (1987, 8–10). Shoman concluded that the colonial legacy in Belize resulted in "a tendency for geographical regions to be inhabited primarily by particular ethnic groups and for ethnic groups to be occupation specific" (1987, 10). Shoman has argued that the historical regionalization of Belize's four major ethnic groups, which has persisted into the twentieth century, served colonial policies by promoting cultural isolation and autonomous development (1994). As a consequence of these policies, specific ethnic groups have become identified with particular geographic locations and predominant economic activities. He has also

FIGURE 1 Belize Settlement by Major Ethnic Groups



suggested that these ethnic-based population distributions represent the spatial manifestations of the colonial policies specifically designed to exploit "inter-ethnic prejudices in the classical colonial tradition of 'divide and rule'" (Shoman 1987, 10).¹ The connections between the settlement histories of Belize's major ethnic groups and the regional economic specializations of those groups have thus contributed to forming specific culture regions within the country (see figure 1).

Major Ethnic Groups and Their Spatial Distributions

The current population of Belize is dominated by four major ethnic groups: mestizos, creoles, indigenous peoples (Amerindians), and the Garifuna (who call themselves Garinagu) (see table 1).² Their spatial distributions across the Belizean landscape were largely established by the end of the nineteenth century. Shoman has summarized these historical ethnic settlement patterns: "Most Creoles resided in Belize Town and its surrounding villages; the Garingu [Garinagu] and the Mopan and the Kekchi Maya were concentrated in the south; the Mestizos and Maya from Yucatán were clustered in the north; whereas the western Cayo district presented a more diverse mix of Creoles, Mestizos, Maya and Lebanese. . . . The majority of persons in these ethnic groups tended to practice occupations relating to the geographic areas in which they resided" (Shoman 1994, 167). These generalizations continued to characterize the geographic distributions of Belize's population through the mid-1980s.

Historical Settlement Patterns

The importance of historical processes in shaping the current spatial distribution of Belize's ethnic groups necessitates a brief overview of these forces. Historically, creoles have comprised the dominant ethnic

1. Gerald Scully observed recently that both colonialism and communism have suppressed the emergence of cultural conflict (1995, 7). He defines cultural conflict, citing Lewis Coser, as "a struggle over values and claims to status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" (Coser 1968, 232). The independence movement and the more recent dissolution of communism has revived cultural conflict in many nations, as noted by P. T. Bauer (1965, 1976, 1984). In the case of Belize, independence has brought the country's various ethnic groups into closer contact, stimulating an awareness of group identity and the multiculturalism of Belizean society and its ethnocentric differences. Scully noted that in a multicultural society, "the ethnocentric differences of race, religion, ethnicity and language often lead to enmity" (1995, 8). He cited a number of manifestations of enmity, including separatism and the formation of political parties along ethnic or cultural lines. In Belize, both of the two major political parties, the People's United Party (PUP) and the United Democratic Party (UDP), were formed initially along ethnic and religious lines. The PUP represented predominantly rural interests, while the UDP championed urban interests (Young 1978).

2. Sebastián Cayetano reported, "the Central American Black Caribs of Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Nicaragua have always believed themselves to be *Garinagu* (the people), speaking *Garifuna* (the language)" (Cayetano n.d., 22).

TABLE 1 Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Belize by District, 1980 and 1991

District	Creole	Garifuna	Mestizo	Maya	Others ^a	Total
1980						
Belize	38,152	1,626	6,655	406	3,962	50,801
Cayo	7,079	434	11,190	1,142	2,992 ^b	22,837
Corozal	3,870	527	13,375	3,229	1,901	22,902
Orange Walk	2,584	526	14,751	1,601	3,408	22,870
Stann Creek	4,666	6,466	1,489	766	794	14,181
Toledo	1,400	1,494	694	6,692	1,482	11,762
Total	57,751	11,073	48,154	13,836	14,539	145,353
1991						
Belize	36,875	2,852	10,170	671	3,744	54,312
Cayo	8,390	619	21,170	3,161	3,183 ^b	36,523
Corozal	2,151	361	21,056	1,401	3,495	28,419
Orange Walk	2,243	368	21,859	2,777	3,258 ^b	30,505
Stann Creek	4,389	6,323	4,142	1,412	1,211	17,477
Toledo	1,003	1,751	2,080	10,988	1,664	17,486
Total	55,051	12,274	80,477	20,410	16,555	184,722

Sources: CARICOM, 1980–1981 *Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: Belize* (Kingston: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, n.d); Central Planning Unit, *Belize: Abstract of Statistics, 1981* (Belmopan: Statistical Office, 1982); and Ministry of Finance, 1991 *Population Census: Major Findings* (Belmopan: Central Statistical Office, n.d.).

^a Includes Mennonites, East Indians, Chinese, Whites, others, those replying “don’t know” or not stating.

^b Major centers of Mennonite settlement are Spanish Lookout (in Cayo) and Shipyard and Blue Creek (in Orange Walk).

group in Belize. The term *creole* as employed in Belize designates people of African or European descent or both who were “born in the Americas but whose ancestors come from another continent” (Shoman 1994, 44). Originally brought to Belize in the 1720s as slave labor to work in the logwood and mahogany industries, the African-creole population came to outnumber the British slaveowners by the middle of the eighteenth century (Bolland 1988, 20).³ This historical association of slavery and creolization with forestry and the export industry’s geographic localization at the Bay Settlement (Belize City) at the mouth of the Belize River

3. The date of the introduction of slaves into the settlement at the Bay of Honduras is uncertain. Waddell suggested 1722 or 1724 (1961, 14). Others have asserted that the earliest logwood cutters kept slaves, placing their presence on the coast fifty years or so earlier.

culminated in the concentration of creoles in Belize City and Belize District (see table 1).

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, mestizos (people of mixed Indian and Spanish ancestry) have comprised the second-largest ethnic group in Belize. In the 1980s, they surpassed the creoles as the numerically dominant ethnic group. Their predominance in the northern districts (Corozal and Orange Walk) reflect migrations from Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula during the civil unrest known as the Guerra de las Castas (1847–1853) (see table 1 and figure 1). The arrival of mestizos and Maya from the Yucatán had both demographic and economic significance for the colony. Their settlement in the northern districts signaled a major expansion in the population of Belize, which more than doubled from about 10,000 in 1845 to over 25,000 by 1861, as well as a shift in the colony's population center of gravity (Shoman 1994; Bolland 1988; Camille 1996, 56). By 1861 more than half of the colony's population was located in the northern districts, with many of the new settlers living in towns and small villages such as Corozal Town, Orange Walk Town, San Estevan, and Guinea Grass (Shoman 1994; Woods, Perry, and Steagall 1996, 8). Mestizos introduced a small-scale sedentary agricultural tradition to Belize and initiated cultivation of commercial sugarcane and sugar processing in the colony.

Amerindians consisting of Mopan, Q'eqchi', and other Maya, the indigenous population of the region, make up the third major ethnic group in Belize (table 1). Historically, most Maya have lived in the interior of the southern district of Toledo, with secondary concentrations along the western border with Guatemala in Cayo District and in the northern districts (see figure 1). Many of the Maya crossed into Belize from Guatemala and the Yucatán during the nineteenth century (Wilk 1987; Wilk and Chapin 1990; Birdwell-Pheasant 1985; Schackt 1984). The emigration of Maya from Guatemala has continued throughout the twentieth century due to human rights abuses and unsettled conditions in the Petén region. The Maya practice traditional migratory or long-fallow subsistence (milpa) agriculture, live in scattered settlements, and supplement their household income by hunting and gathering forest products and working as laborers. Alma Young noted, "the Mayas tend to be outside the economic and political mainstream . . . , [and] tend to become Hispanicized . . ." (Young 1978, 38).

The fourth major ethnic group consists of the Black Caribs or Garifuna (see table 1 and figure 1). The Garifuna migrated to the Caribbean coast of Central America from the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras (Roatan), where they were exiled after an uprising against the British on the island of Saint Vincent in 1795 (Taylor 1951; Cayetano n.d.; Wilk and Chapin 1990; González 1986). Bolland has reported that 150 Garifuna, who were brought into the settlement as laborers for wood-cutting opera-

tions, settled in Stann Creek and Punta Gorda in 1802 (Bolland 1986, 25–26). By 1841 the major Garifuna settlement at Dangriga was reported to be a flourishing village (Shoman 1994). Historically, the Garifuna influence has been concentrated in Dangriga and in smaller coastal settlements in Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, including Seine Bight, Hopkins, and Punta Gorda (see figure 1). The Garifuna traditionally engaged in small-scale commercial agriculture and fishing that supplied food to the settlement at Belize City. Young observed that the Caribs have tended to remain outside the economic and political mainstream and to become “creolized” (1978, 38).

A fifth minor ethnic group, the Mennonites, represent recent migration by members of this German-speaking religious sect from Mexico and Canada (Martin 1973; Everitt 1983; Perry and Woods 1990). A combination of overcrowding, factionalism, and disagreements with the Mexican government started the migration to Belize. According to the Belizean government, the number of Mennonites living in Belize was 5,647 in the 1980 census and 5,763 in the 1991 census. Most Mennonites live in rural communities, mainly in the districts of Orange Walk, Cayo, and Corozal. The major centers of Mennonite settlement are found in the northern districts (Blue Creek and Shipyard in Orange Walk District and Little Belize in Corozal District) and in Cayo District (Spanish Lookout). Living communally, the Mennonites have introduced to Belize mid-latitude commercial agricultural production on a large scale of corn, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. Most Mennonite agricultural production is destined for the domestic market.

Recent Patterns of Change

Between the late 1970s and 1991, the traditional ethnic shares of Belize’s population were significantly modified by selective patterns of immigration and emigration. Civil war in El Salvador, political turmoil in Nicaragua, and ethnic oppression in the Guatemalan Petén induced massive immigration of Spanish- and Maya-speaking peoples to Belize (Demko and Wood 1987). Several circumstances promoted these population movements. First and foremost was the relative ease of movement into Belize, particularly by Q’eqchi’ Maya from Guatemala who had relatives in Belize. In addition, the political stability of Belize, greater availability of land (due to a population density that is low by Central American standards), and the support for refugees offered by government agencies and non-governmental organizations all attracted immigrants who had been displaced from neighboring countries.

It has been estimated that twenty-five thousand Central American immigrants and refugees arrived in Belize during the 1980s (Belize Government n.d., 6, 10). Official census figures indicate that the population of

Belize in 1980 of 145,000 rose to 189,000 by 1991. Data from the 1991 population census indicate that Central American immigrants now account for more than 13 percent of the country's total population, up from 8 percent in 1980.

Concurrent with this influx of Central Americans, large numbers of English-speaking Belizeans or Afro-Belizeans, creoles, and Garifuna were reported to have emigrated to the United States (Vernon 1990, 9; Moberg 1992). Dylan Vernon suggested that creoles comprised between 65 and 75 percent of Belizean emigrants to the United States (1990, 12–13), citing Roser, Snyder, and Chaffee (1986, 10, 19). Anecdotal evidence also indicates that significant numbers of Garifuna have emigrated to the United States. These selective immigration and emigration patterns have produced substantial changes in the demographic characteristics of Belize's population from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s.

Belizean Population as of 1980: Ethnic Mix and Spatial Distributions

The population of Belize in 1980 had increased by more than 25,000 over the 1970 level to exceed 145,000. This increase represented an average annual growth rate of 1.9 percent (figure 1, table 1). The highest growth rates occurred in the northern districts (Corozal and Orange Walk) and in Cayo District, with rates averaging more than 3 percent per year. These districts correspond to the areas of heaviest concentrations of Spanish-speakers (mestizos and Maya). The country's sugar industry was also found in the northern districts, at Libertad (Corozal) and Tower Hill (Orange Walk). The 1970s witnessed rapid growth in the industry, with sugar production almost tripling between 1965 and 1978 and plant capacity expanding at the Tower Hill facility (Woods, Perry, and Steagall 1992). Over the same period, sugarcane acreage increased more than ninefold, with company-owned cane fields being sold to small cane farmers in 1972. The slowest growth in population occurred in Belize and Stann Creek Districts, where growth rates were well below 1 percent per year. These districts traditionally have contained the heaviest concentrations of Afro-Belizeans (creoles and Garifuna).

Analysis of district-level data on place of birth and place of usual residence contained in the 1980 census reveals limited levels of internal migration or inertia (table 2). The populations of Belize, Corozal, Orange Walk, and Cayo Districts manifested the greatest degree of spatial immobility. More than 89 percent of individuals born in Belize, Corozal, and Orange Walk Districts still resided in the districts where they were born, while 82 percent of those born in Cayo District continued to live there in 1980. In contrast, those born in Stann Creek District were the most likely to have moved, with 17 percent living in Belize District and 8 percent in Corozal District. Those born in Toledo District were relatively mobile as

TABLE 2 Percentage of Local-Born Population, by Place of Birth and Usual Place of Residence, 1980

Place of Birth	Usual Residence					
	Belize	Cayo	Corozal	Orange Walk	Stann Creek	Toledo
Belize	89.8	4.2	1.8	2.2	1.6	0.3
Cayo	6.6	82.0	2.4	4.8	1.6	2.5
Corozal	4.6	1.2	89.4	4.2	0.5	0.1
Orange Walk	4.2	1.6	3.6	89.9	0.5	0.1
Stann Creek	17.1	5.6	8.0	2.6	62.1	1.7
Toledo	7.7	3.1	2.2	1.9	12.0	72.6
As a percentage of the national total	35.9	15.1	15.5	15.2	9.5	8.2

Source: CARICOM, 1980–1981 Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: Belize, vol. 1, t. 4.1.

well, with 12 percent living in Stann Creek District and 8 percent in Belize District.

In 1980 slightly more than half of the country’s population lived in urban areas, down from 54 percent in 1970. The largest share of the Belizean population (nearly 35 percent) lived in Belize District, which includes Belize City, the country’s largest city and former colonial administrative center (figure 1). Population growth rates in Belize District and Belize City, however, have lagged significantly behind national growth rates, with the Belize District’s population increasing by only 1,400 and the city’s by a mere 720.

Historically, creoles have concentrated in Belize District and Belize City (Everitt 1986; Bolland 1988, 69, 72). Census data for 1980 indicate that two-thirds of the country’s creole population lived in Belize District, accounting for more than three-quarters of its total population (table 1). The population growth rate of Belize District over the 1970s (0.3 percent) lagged behind the national rate (1.9 percent) and those of all other districts by a wide margin. Traditionally, Belize District has been the most heavily urbanized region of the country, with average rates of more than 79 percent of the district’s population classified as urban throughout the 1960s and 1970s (see table 3).

The northern districts of Corozal and Orange Walk as well as Cayo District each contained about 16 percent of the nation’s population in 1980. The average annual rate of population growth in each of these districts over the 1970s exceeded the national growth rate by a significant

TABLE 3 Total Population of Belize, by Residence and District, 1960–1991

District	1960	1970	1980	1991	Growth Rate ^a 1960–1991
Belize	40,084	49,355	50,801	57,030	1.14%
Urban	32,867	39,050	40,896	45,936	1.06%
Rural	7,217	10,305	9,905	11,094	1.40%
Cayo	11,764	15,975	22,837	37,693	3.83%
Urban	3,497	6,531	10,986	16,100	5.05%
Rural	8,267	9,444	11,851	21,593	3.15%
Corozal	9,730	15,551	22,902	28,464	3.55%
Urban	3,171	4,724	6,899	7,062	2.62%
Rural	6,559	10,827	16,003	21,402	3.89%
Orange Walk	10,306	17,041	22,870	30,681	3.58%
Urban	2,157	5,698	8,439	11,014	5.40%
Rural	8,149	11,343	14,431	19,667	2.88%
Stann Creek	10,906	13,023	14,181	18,085	1.64%
Urban	5,287	6,939	6,661	6,435	0.63%
Rural	5,619	6,084	7,520	11,650	2.38%
Toledo	7,715	8,989	11,762	17,439	2.67%
Urban	1,789	2,083	2,396	3,458	2.15%
Rural	5,926	6,906	9,366	13,981	2.81%
Total	90,505	119,934	145,353	189,392	2.41%
Urban	48,768	65,025	76,277	90,005	2.00%
Rural	41,737	54,909	69,076	99,387	2.84%

Sources: British Honduras, *Report for the Years 1964–1965* (Belize City: Printing Department, 1967); Belize, *Belize Abstract of Statistics, 1977* (Belmopan: Central Planning Unit, n.d.); CARICOM, *1980–1981 Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: Belize* (Kingston: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, n.d.); Belize, *1991—Population Census: Major Findings* (Belmopan: Ministry of Finance, Central Statistical Office, n.d.).

^a National growth rates: for 1960–1991, 2.41; for 1970–1991, 2.20; and for 1980–1991, 2.44. Urban growth rates: for 1970–1991, 1.24; for 1980–1991, 1.52; and for 1960–1991, 2.00.

margin (nearly 4 percent in Corozal; 3.6 percent in Cayo; and nearly 3 percent in Orange Walk). Mestizos and Yucatecan Maya historically have concentrated in the northern districts, after arriving in Belize during the Guerra de las Castas. The population of Cayo District has been a more diverse mix resulting from internal migrations of creoles from Belize District and the migration of indigenous peoples from the Petén and mestizos from the northern districts. The degree of urbanization in these districts has varied, ranging from 48 percent in Cayo in 1980 to 37 percent in Orange Walk and 30 percent in Corozal.

In 1980 nearly 10 percent of Belize's population resided in Stann

Creek District, which had grown somewhat faster than Belize District but significantly slower than the national rate over the 1970s. During that decade, private-capital investment in the Stann Creek citrus industry, as measured by commercial bank loans, rose sharply (Barnett 1982, 166). Citrus trees require six to ten years to reach bearing age, and thus investments made in the 1970s began to yield increases during the 1980s. Historically, the Garifuna have concentrated in Stann Creek District, particularly in Dangriga and a number of coastal settlements (including Hopkins and Seine Bight) as well as in the coastal regions of Toledo District, Punta Gorda, and Barranco (González 1986). In 1980 nearly 48 percent of Stann Creek's population was classified as urban, down from more than 53 percent in 1970. The decrease in the level of urbanization resulted from the decline in the population of the district's primary urban center, Dangriga, while the population of the rest of the district increased.

The population growth rate in Toledo District (2.7 percent per year) nearly equaled those of the northern districts and Cayo District. The 1970s witnessed a restoration of Belize's banana industry in Toledo and Stann Creek Districts. Private investment in banana cultivation rose significantly between 1974 and 1980, as reflected in commercial bank loans (Barnett 1982, 166). Historically, the dominant ethnic groups in the district have been the Garifuna and the Q'eqchi' Maya. Traditionally, the Garifuna have concentrated in settlements along the coast of the district (Punta Gorda and Barranco), while the Q'eqchi' have localized in scattered settlements in the interior (San Antonio, Pueblo Viejo, and Aguacate). In 1980 the Maya population accounted for nearly 57 percent of the district's population, and Garifuna comprised about 13 percent. Toledo District has been the most rural region of the country, with about one-fifth of its population classified as urban in 1980. Mark Moberg reported that Central American immigrants to Belize have settled predominantly in "uninhabited rural areas" (1992, 23).

The residential pattern of Belizeans changed over the 1970s from relatively urban to a less urbanized population, reversing a pattern of increasing urbanization begun in 1921. These changes in levels of urbanization have exhibited distinct spatial and ethnic components. In 1980 the highest degree of urbanization occurred in Belize District, where more than 78 percent of the population lived in the nation's primate city. Of the Belize District population, more than 78 percent consisted of Afro-Belizeans (creoles and Garifuna), with nearly 58 percent of the country's Afro-Belizean population residing in the district (table 1).

The populations of Cayo and Stann Creek Districts ranked next as the most heavily urbanized districts, with 48 percent and 47 percent of their populations living in urban centers (in San Ignacio/Santa Elena, Belmopan, Benque Viejo, and Dangriga). But the directions of change in these districts differed: the level of urbanization fell in Stann Creek, while

it increased in Cayo. The decline in urbanization in Stann Creek is clearly associated with Dangriga's absolute loss of population, while the surrounding district's population continued to grow. The increase in urbanization in Cayo reflects the rapid growth of Belmopan after the relocation of political-administrative functions from Belize City as well as modest growth in San Ignacio and Benque Viejo. Levels of urbanization in the two northern districts remained relatively stable, with a slight increase in Orange Walk (37 percent) and a steady state in Corozal (30 percent). The population of Toledo (the country's most rural district with only 23 percent of its inhabitants classed as urban in 1970) became even more rurally oriented, with only one in five Toledans residing in urban centers.

Belizean Population, 1991: Ethnic Mix and Spatial Redistribution

Between the censuses of 1980 and 1991, the population of Belize increased by 44,000 (30.3 percent), having grown at an average annual rate of 2.4 percent. This growth was not distributed uniformly across the country, however, nor was it consistent across ethnic groups. The highest growth rates were experienced in the west and north, while growth was slowest along the central coast (Stann Creek and Belize Districts). Data in table 1 indicate that the most rapid population growth occurred in districts made up predominantly of Spanish-speaking mestizo and Mayan populations and that these groups' share of the total population in all districts increased between 1980 and 1991, with the exception of the Maya in Corozal District.

Simultaneously, creoles and Garifuna have decreased as proportions of the population both nationally and in nearly all districts. The creole population, which declined from 39.7 percent of Belize's total population in 1980 to 29.8 percent in 1991, also lost shares in every district (see table 4). While the proportion of Garifuna declined less drastically, from 7.6 percent to 6.6 percent of the total population, this group lost shares in all districts except in Belize District. As already noted, these two ethnic groups make up the main portion of the Belizean population that has emigrated.

The creole and Garifuna populations historically have settled in urban areas: the creoles residing in Belize City, and the Garifuna in Dangriga, Punta Gorda, and small urban communities along the southern coast. The selective emigration by urbanites and immigration by rural dwellers has altered the urban-rural mix of the country as well as its ethnic composition.

The government's report on refugees noted that over the past twenty years, creoles and Garifuna have composed the mainstream of Belizean emigrants, migrating mostly to the United States (Belize Gov-

TABLE 4 Ethnic Distribution of the Population of Belize by District, as Percentages, 1980 and 1991

District	Creole (%)	Mestizo (%)	Garifuna (%)	Maya/ Q'eqchi' (%)	Others ^a (%)
1980					
Belize	75.1	13.1	3.2	0.8	7.8
Cayo	31.0	49.0	1.9	5.0	13.1 ^b
Corozal	16.9	58.4	2.3	14.1	8.3
Orange Walk	11.3	64.5	2.3	7.0	14.9 ^b
Stann Creek	32.9	10.5	45.6	5.4	5.6
Toledo	11.9	5.9	12.7	56.9	12.6
Totals	39.7	33.1	7.6	9.5	10.1
1991					
Belize	67.9	18.7	5.3	1.2	6.9
Cayo	23.0	58.0	1.7	8.7	8.6 ^b
Corozal	7.6	74.1	1.3	4.9	12.1
Orange Walk	7.4	71.7	1.2	9.1	10.6 ^b
Stann Creek	25.1	23.7	36.2	8.1	6.9
Toledo	5.7	11.9	10.0	62.8	9.5
Totals	29.8	43.6	6.6	11.0	8.9
Change in Share 1980–1991					
Belize	-9.59	42.75	65.63	50.00	-11.54
Cayo	-25.81	18.3	-10.53	74.00	-34.35
Corozal	-55.03	26.88	-35.29	-65.25	45.78
Orange Walk	-34.51	11.16	-43.48	30.00	-28.86
Stann Creek	-23.71	125.71	-20.61	50.00	23.21
Toledo	-52.10	50.42	-21.26	10.37	-24.60
Totals	-24.94	31.72	-13.16	15.79	-11.88

Sources: CARICOM, 1980–1981 *Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: Belize* (Kingston: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, n.d.); Central Planning Unit, *Belize: Abstract of Statistics, 1981* (Belmopan: Statistical Office, 1982); and Ministry of Finance, *1991 Population Census: Major Findings* (Belmopan: Central Statistical Office, n.d.).

^a Includes Mennonites, East Indians, Chinese, whites, and those who responded “other” or “don’t know” or did not respond.

^b Includes major centers of Mennonite settlements: Spanish Lookout (in Cayo) and Shipyard and Blue Creek (in Orange Walk).

ernment n.d., 10). This report confirmed the earlier observation made by John Everitt that "the vast majority of the emigrants are Creoles or Garifuna—the black portion of the population of Belize" (1984a, 320).

The number of legal Belizean emigrants to the U.S. in the 1980s was reported to be 8,561 (U.S. Department of Justice). If illegal immigrants are included, that figure doubles to more than 17,000, based on recent conservative estimates of at least one illegal for every legal one, as reported by the U.S. Consular Section. Everitt stated that the U.S. Consulate in Belize City indicated that in 1980, "at least two-thirds" of Belizeans in the United States were "out-of-status" or in the country illegally (Everitt 1984a, 319). Fears that the emigration stream of Belizeans to the United States may be even larger have been expressed by Vernon, who estimated the total to be 60,000 to 70,000 (1990, 6).

The 1990 U.S. census provided a count of legal Belizean immigrants and their geographic locations. The U.S. Bureau of the Census reported that almost 30,000 Belizeans resided in the United States in 1990, one-third of whom were naturalized citizens. More than three-quarters of the Belizeans legally residing in the United States in 1990 were located in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago (see table 5). Belizean immigrants to the United States thus have maintained their traditional preference for urban locations, with nearly 98 percent residing inside metropolitan areas.

Concurrent with the emigration of English-speaking creoles and Garifuna, nearly 30,000 Central American refugees were estimated to have immigrated to Belize in the late 1980s, creating a projected net immigration of more than 12,000. Other estimates have varied considerably, with Michael Stone reporting 60,000 in 1989 (1990, 102) and Joseph Palacio claiming the arrival of more than 24,000 refugees between 1981 and 1984 (Palacio 1988, 175). The major source regions for Central American immigrants to Belize were Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. These estimates indicated that almost a quarter of Belize's population growth between 1980 and 1991 was attributable to net migration, while the remainder resulted from natural increases. Stone reported similar conclusions in a 1989 United Nations socioeconomic survey of Belmopan's peripheral settlements.

The patterns of demographic change observed in the 1980s were confirmed by the findings of the 1991 census taken in Belize. It reported that the total foreign-born enumerated population numbered more than 25,000 in 1991, compared with almost 12,000 in 1980 and only 4,000 in 1970. Of the foreign-born in Belize in 1991, 41 percent came from Guatemala, 22 percent from El Salvador, nearly 10 percent from Mexico, and 9 percent from Honduras (see table 6). These census data also indicate that the majority of the Central American immigrants (72.6 percent) have located in rural rather than urban areas of the country.

TABLE 5 Major Concentrations of Belizeans Residing in the United States, 1990

Metropolitan Area	Number	Percent	Number in Central Cities	Number Not in Central Cities
Los Angeles, Anaheim, Riverside	12,821	47.8%	9,680	3,141
New York, Northern New Jersey, Long Island	7,388	24.7%	6,479	909
Chicago	2,335	7.8%	2,131	204
Miami, Fort Lauderdale	917	3.1%	203	714
New Orleans	825	2.7%	266	559
Houston	433	1.4%	261	172
Total in U.S. metro areas	24,719	82.5%	19,020	5,699
Total Belizeans residing in the United States	29,957	100.0%	21,455	8,502

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Metropolitan Areas, 1990 CP-2-1B* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).

Apparently, these immigrants have been attracted to existing concentrations of Spanish-speaking mestizo and Mayan-speaking populations as well as by potential opportunities for employment. Regions culturally and linguistically similar to immigrant populations are promoting the incorporation of the new migrants into the Belizean population. Toponyms (place-names) provide an indication of the degree of regional ethnic dominance in Belize even on relatively small-scale maps. The prevalence of English place-names in Belize District, coastal Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, and much of Cayo District contrasts sharply with frequent Spanish place-names in Corozal and Orange Walk Districts, the western and central portions of Cayo District, and the interior of Toledo District.

The rapid growth of population in Cayo, Orange Walk, and Corozal, each containing a dominant proportion of the country's Spanish-speaking population, is largely attributable to the refugees' propensity to settle in these predominantly Spanish-speaking areas. This locational propensity of immigrants has been confirmed by Everitt, Stone, the Govern-

TABLE 6 Selected Central American Foreign-Born Population in Belize by District, 1991, with Totals for 1970 and 1980

District	Guatemala ^a	El Salvador ^b	Mexico ^c	Honduras ^d
Total prior to 1970	924	64	1,823	512
Total in 1980	2,979	1,091	2,942	1,559
1991				
Belize	770	779	221	684
Cayo	3,925	2,550	468	220
Corozal	929	602	801	153
Orange Walk	1,579	970	1,035	169
Stann Creek	1,490	483	19	924
Toledo	1,845	266	7	179
Total	10,538	5,650	2,551	2,329

Sources: CARICOM, *1980–1981 Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: Belize* (Kingston: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, n.d.); and Ministry of Finance, *Central Statistical Office, 1991 Population Census: Major Findings* (Belmopan: Government Printery, n.d.).

NOTE: The number of foreign-born persons in Belize totaled 4,296 in 1970; 11,743 in 1980; and 25,548 in 1991.

^a Guatemalans in Belize increased by 27.6 percent from 1970 to 1980 and by 54.8 percent from 1980 to 1991.

^b Salvadorans in Belize increased by 13.8 percent from 1970 to 1980 and by 33 percent from 1980 to 1991.

^c Mexicans in Belize increased by 15 percent from 1970 to 1980 but decreased by 2.9 percent from 1980 to 1991.

^d Hondurans in Belize increased by 14.1 percent from 1970 to 1980 and by 5.6 percent from 1980 to 1991.

ment of Belize report on refugees, and findings regarding language fluency contained in the 1991 census.

Moreover, Central American immigrants could find employment in agriculture (in cane cultivation or sugar mills in Corozal and Orange Walk and general farming in Cayo) or could obtain vacant land (thanks to resettlement programs in Cayo). The dependence of the Belizean economy on the export of agricultural commodities, especially sugar, and the cyclical nature of prices for these products in international markets is well known. During the early 1980s, sugar accounted for roughly half of the country's export earnings, with cane occupying nearly half of Belize's arable land (Woods, Perry, and Steagall 1992). Cane harvests, cane acreage harvested, sugar production, and the value of sugar and molasses harvests all peaked in 1982–1983. World sugar prices were depressed during the mid-1980s, often below Belizean production costs, forcing major realignments in agriculture in Belize's northern districts. Between 1980 and 1983, the Belizean economy was contracting, with the real gross

domestic product declining to a low of a minus 2.0 percent in 1983 (Alvarez 1988, 40, 50). The eventual recovery of international sugar prices stimulated increased cane cultivation, sugar production, and sugar exports by 1988–1989.

Stann Creek District experienced the largest growth rate in the mestizo population in Belize, which increased by nearly 126 percent between 1980 and 1991. Much of this growth occurred in the Stann Creek River Valley, the center of the country's citrus industry, and on the coastal plain along the Southern Highway, which is associated with Belize's resurgent banana industry. Increased commercial bank loans to these agricultural sectors during the late 1970s began to produce tangible outputs by the mid-1980s, increasing the demand for seasonal labor. As a result, Central American immigrants have found employment in both the citrus groves and banana plantations of Stann Creek, displacing native Belizean workers (Medina 1992).

Association of Ethnicity and Location

Generalized statements that various ethnic groups in Belize have particular geographic distributions influenced by historic or cultural factors imply a functional relationship: that the magnitude of a given ethnic group depends on the district or region under consideration (Bolland 1986, 44; Shoman 1994). Formally, this relationship may be expressed as an association between ethnic categories and geographic location. Such a formulation permits calculating various measures of association, indicating the degree of dependency between the two factors of ethnicity and location (Reynolds 1977, 14–51). Calculation of such measures of association implies a test of independence.⁴

Data on ethnicity from the 1980 Belize census and that of 1991 have been aggregated into three categories: mestizo or Amerindian (Spanish- and Mayan-speakers); Afro-Belizean (creole and Garifuna); and others. These data have been cross-tabulated by administrative districts in table 7 and employed to calculate Goodman and Kruskal's Lambda statistic as a measure of the association of ethnicity and location in each year (Goodman and Kruskal 1954; Reynolds 1977, 34–37).⁵ For the 1980 data in table 7, Lambda equals 0.4542, and for 1991 it equals 0.4061. These statistics

4. Census data represent enumerations or counts of individuals classified by residence. Because these data are not true measurements, they are appropriately assessed using non-parametric measures (Siegel 1956, 21–29).

5. Lambda statistics reflecting the influence of ethnicity on location (administrative districts) for 1980 and 1991 have been calculated and are significantly smaller, but they show a pattern dissimilar to the postulated relationship. The Lambda for 1980 was 0.1001, indicating that using ethnicity as a predictive variable for location results in a 10 percent reduction in error. In 1991 the value was 0.1058, representing a slight improvement in error-reduction over the 1980 value.

TABLE 7 *Relationship between Ethnicity and Spatial Distribution of Population in Belize, 1980 and 1991*

Ethnicity	Location (Administrative Districts)						Total
	Belize	Cayo	Corozal	Orange Walk	Stann Creek	Toledo	
1980							
Mestizo or Indian	7,062	12,332	16,604	16,352	2,255	7,387	61,992
Afro-Belizean	39,777	7,513	4,397	3,110	11,132	2,893	68,822
Other ^a	3,962	2,992	1,901	3,408	794	1,482	14,539
Total	50,801	22,837	22,902	22,870	14,181	11,762	145,353
1991							
Mestizo or Indian	10,841	24,331	22,457	24,636	5,554	13,068	100,887
Afro-Belizean	39,727	9,009	2,512	2,611	10,712	2,754	67,325
Other ^a	3,744	3,183	3,450	3,258	1,211	1,664	16,510
Total	54,312	36,523	28,419	30,505	17,477	17,386	184,722

Sources: CARICOM, 1980–1981 *Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean: Belize* (Kingston: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, n.d.); and Ministry of Finance, Central Statistical Office, 1991 *Population Census: Major Findings* (Belmopan: Government Printery, n.d.).

^a Other includes East Indian, Mennonite, Chinese, Syrian or Lebanese, white, and those who responded “other” or “don’t know” or did not respond.

represent the reductions in errors associated with knowledge of the independent variable (location or administrative district) in predicting values of the dependent variable (ethnicity) in comparison with the errors that would have been made had that information not been taken into account. These statistics imply that using location (administrative district) as a predicting variable for ethnicity in Belize results in about 45 percent and 41 percent reduction in errors in estimating ethnic categories for 1980 and 1991, respectively. Such magnitudes suggest moderately strong relationships between location and ethnicity for Belize’s population distributions in both 1980 and 1991. Additionally, they indicate that hypotheses of independence between the two factors should be rejected in both years.

It would be possible to calculate Lambda statistics for ethnicity as a predictor of location. Reynolds has noted that these measures of association are asymmetrical: “One should therefore rely on his substantive knowledge to determine the most appropriate index” (Reynolds 1977, 36). In this context, the historical and cultural forces that have influenced an initial distribution pattern (location) of an ethnic group (such as mestizos and Amerindians living in Corozal and Orange Walk Districts) are embedded in those locations in such a way that location in turn influences the distribution of ethnic groups in subsequent periods. These results add supporting evidence for the path-dependent sequences of change (that is,

hysteresis) identified in recent economic literature (Alchian 1950; David 1985; Arthur 1990; Krugman 1991).⁶

Between 1980 and 1991, with the influx of refugees from Central American countries and the emigration of Afro-Belizeans (mainly to the United States), the strength of the relationship between location and ethnicity has been reduced. Over this eleven-year period, the distribution of the mestizo and Amerindian population has become more evenly distributed, reducing their concentration in the Corozal, Orange Walk, and Belize Districts and increasing their presence in Cayo, Stann Creek, and Toledo Districts. Simultaneously, the distribution of Afro-Belizeans has become increasingly concentrated in Cayo and Belize Districts and less aggregated in Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek, and Toledo Districts.

Implications and Conclusions

The selective immigration and emigration patterns experienced in Belize over these two decades have profoundly influenced the ethnic character and locational patterns of the country's population. First, Belize has undergone a pronounced "Latinization" during the emigration of English-speaking creoles and Garifuna and the immigration of Spanish-speaking Central Americans. The foreign-born proportion of Belize's population has increased dramatically, from 3.6 percent in 1970 to 8.1 percent in 1980 and to 13.5 percent in 1991. More than 83 percent of the increment in new foreign-born residents in Belize arriving between 1970 and 1991 came from Central America: Guatemala (45.2 percent), El Salvador (26.3 percent), Honduras (8.5 percent), and Mexico (3.4 percent).

The Latinization of Belize could accelerate the emigration of creoles and Garifuna out of the country, particularly if their perception of themselves "as rightful heir to British colonial hegemony" is seriously threatened (Belize Government n.d., 5). The perceived Latinization of Belize has already engendered a fear of loss of the cultural and political dominance long enjoyed by Afro-Belizeans (Grant 1967, 53). Another fear of Afro-Belizeans is the potential for "racist treatment" at the hands of Hispanics. This fear has been exacerbated by unsettled boundary problems with Guatemala and threatening statements made by Guatemalan politicians. Such concerns have fostered antagonism between Afro-Belizean citizens and Central American immigrants.

Gerald Scully reported that a crucial characteristic of cultural conflict is the formation of political parties along ethnic or religious lines. Cedric Grant (1967) and Alma Young (1978) both commented years ago on cultural and ethnic factors in Belizean politics. Grant observed that except in Belize City, limited interaction had occurred between Afro-

6. This approach argues that seemingly small historic or "temporally remote" events exert "important influences on the eventual outcome" (David 1985, 32).

Belizeans and Spanish-speaking communities, minimizing potential conflicts (Grant 1967, 54). In his view, cultural differences began to become apparent with the emergence of political parties and issues relating to the country's long-run political future, such as Guatemalan territorial claims versus the desirability of Belizean membership in the West Indian Federation. Young noted the role of improved transportation and communications in bringing the "separate ethnic communities" into closer contact with one another. She observed that the issues associated with the drive for nationhood—whether an independent Belize would have a Caribbean (Anglophone) or a Central American (Iberian) orientation—was an important factor in promoting increased competition between the Afro-Belizean and the Spanish communities (Young 1978, 38–40).

Increased attention on "multiculturalism" in Belize has been prominent in the period following independence (Judd 1990; Ergood 1996). It has the potential to retard the emergence of a cohesive national identity and may promote increased factionalization. Prior to Belizean independence, Grant warned of the potential danger to social and political integration when "too much attention" is focused by ethnic groups on their unique cultural heritages (1967, 55).⁷ He cautioned, "the strength of the differing regional [ethnic] sentiments has placed a considerable strain on the unifying forces within the society. . . . [W]hat British Hondurans need above all, is their own identity. This is likely to remain elusive, despite official attempts to foster a sense of national pride, once cultural particularism is overemphasised" (Grant 1967, 55). This "cultural particularism" has been manifested in the recent formation of such ethnic organizations as the Toledo Maya Cultural Council, the National Garifuna Council, and the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous People (Wilk and Chapin 1990, 38–39).

It is clear that in the future, more of the Central American mestizo and Maya naturalized population and their children (Belizean citizens, if born in Belize) will participate in the electoral process. Increasing numbers and the growing influence of the Hispanic communities as well as erosion of the traditional creole-Garifuna political power structure may prove threatening, further encouraging selective emigration of Afro-Belizeans to the United States. Continued emigration from the Afro-Belizean communities would thus reinforce the cultural and political influence of the Hispanic communities.

In addition, the Spanish-speaking immigrants from Central America have settled in predominantly rural agricultural areas historically

7. The recent study by Gerald Scully reported on the retarding influence that cultural heterogeneity ("multiculturalism") and cultural conflict have exerted on the economic growth of developing countries (1995, 10). According to Scully, "Even if different groups live together peacefully, the lack of a common language and common norms reduces cooperation and increases the cost of transacting" (1995, 8).

dominated by Spanish-speaking populations. Corozal and Orange Walk, traditionally the centers of cane cultivation and sugar processing, have provided agricultural employment opportunities for recent immigrants in the fields and sugar refineries. More recently, potential employment opportunities in agriculturally diversified Cayo District have attracted large numbers of refugees, as has the settlement project at Valle de Paz. The recent expansion of citrus cultivation and processing in the Stann Creek Valley and expansion of banana cultivation south of Dangriga along the Southern Highway have offered employment opportunities that have attracted significant numbers of Central American immigrants to Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

Some Central American migrants have been drawn to urban areas, such as Belize City. Here immigrants have found employment in the "informal economy" as petty traders (in vegetables, clothing, and sundry goods) and also as laborers in various economic sectors, including manufacturing, services, and the construction trades. It has been reported that strong recent economic growth, particularly that associated with public-sector investment, created shortages of local labor and that "construction companies on private-sector projects have had to employ considerable numbers of migrant workers" (Brownbridge and Morgan 1991, 75). These same researchers observed that while unemployment rates are high in urban areas, the prevailing unskilled wage rates (although high by Central American standards) are "unattractive in the context of the prevailing living standards and aspirations of the local workforce" (1991, 88). In 1993, real Belizean gross domestic product (in 1990 Belize dollars) totaled 4,488 dollars per capita (or 2,244 U.S. dollars), substantially higher than comparable GDPs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (IMF 1996).

It appears that the locational and occupational preferences of Central American immigrants tend to mitigate the direct economic threat posed to the creole and Garifuna population. The propensity of Spanish-speaking immigrants to locate in rural areas and find employment in agriculture reduces potential competition for employment in urban areas (particularly in Belize City, Dangriga, and Punta Gorda), thus forestalling potential resentment over economic issues. Clearly, the influx of Central Americans has increased the available labor supply, exerting downward pressure on wage rates and reducing employment opportunities in a country already experiencing high rates of unemployment. Laurie Medina, for example, has noted complaints by Afro-Belizeans that jobs in the citrus groves of the Stann Creek Valley have been filled by "non-Belizeans from neighboring Spanish-speaking countries" who have displaced native Belizeans (Medina 1992, 144). Concerns have also been expressed about the willingness of immigrants to work for lower wages and under substandard working conditions, again displacing native Belizeans (including Afro-Belizeans).

Recent demographic changes in Belize have been stimulated by differing immigration and emigration patterns, specifically, the in-migration of Central Americans and the out-migration of Afro-Belizeans. These differential flows of ethnic groups into and out of the country have reflected different sets of push and pull factors: immigrating Central Americans have responded to the "push" of civil unrest at home and the "pull" of political stability and perceived economic opportunities in Belize; meanwhile, Afro-Belizeans have reacted to the push of limited economic opportunities in their home country and the pull of potential opportunities in the United States (Goodrich 1936; Hamilton and Chinchilla 1991, 76). As has been shown, these recent movements have drastically altered the traditional ethnic composition of Belize's population and its socioeconomic characteristics, including its spatial distribution.

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