

Clovis E. Semmes. *Cultural Hegemony and African American Development*. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992).

The purpose of this book is to examine cultural aspects of hegemonic relations between White Americans and African Americans, a neglected topic which the author believes should provide the basis for African American Studies programs. Although Semmes establishes culture as the focus of his analysis, political and economic forces are clearly important for understanding the position of Black Americans in the changing social organization of the U.S. Defined as regularly in subjective states, culture is theorized as interacting with social organization, as institutional settings frame cultural expressions and vice versa.

Despite the rather narrow definition of culture, the author analyzes a wide variety of cultural forms and elements related to Black American experience. These include both routine activities and artistic work as well as the constraints on cultural expression at different points in time, the availability of resources to support cultural creativity, the effects of positive forms and the reasons for maladaptive ones.

Critical to the author's argument about the centrality of culture is the notion of cultural hegemony, the systemic negation of one culture by another, which forms one end of a dialectical process whose manifestation is dehumanization. Cultural hegemony is theorized to create the need for cultural reconstruction among Blacks, a life-affirming, humanizing response to cultural negation. This theoretical approach is offered with reference only to its relation to the work of Black scholars and those concerned with the African American experience. However, this work can be understood as an important contribution to recent critical analyses of modern society and the subordination of minority cultures by such authors as John Ogbu, Zygmunt Bauman, and Joel Spring.

The uniqueness of this book is that it builds on the cultural discussions of previous efforts which focussed on the political and economic exploitation of African Americans. Drawing on the work of E. Franklin Frazier and Harold Cruse, in particular, the author reveals the importance of culture by illuminating how culture interacts with political and economic orders to create contradictions and dilemmas for Blacks in different historical periods. The theoretical framework informs substantive analyses of several key concepts and topics: The implications of legitimacy for mental health; cultural production, economics and the media; the role of religion; health conditions and their effects on development; and cultural revitalization.

Several flaws distract from the contributions of this work. Greater theoretical clarity is needed in several discussions of culture

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and its relations to power and economics. Additionally, the lack of any visual aids (graphics, photographs, inserts), the type-face selected by the publisher, and the lack of breaks in the text make for tedious reading. Nevertheless, this book offers detailed, interesting discussions of the theories and research of early Black scholars as well as provocative analyses of African American cultural and social dilemmas and potential solutions to development problems. This book is well worth reading for these contributions as well as for its inspiration for analyses of other non-White groups' experiences with the dynamics of assimilation in American cultural history.

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**Suzanne M. Sinke and Rudolph J. Vecoli, eds. *A Century of European Migrations, 1830-1930*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 395 pp.**

This collection of sixteen essays stems from the proceedings of a 1986 symposium commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota. Based on work by American and European scholars, this volume owes its strength to transnational and comparative perspectives and to theoretical approaches strongly inspired by Frank Thistlethwaite's influential 1960 essay "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century." Reprinted in the present volume, Thistlethwaite's paper advocated studying European migration—and return migration—as a means of social mobility in the context of industrialization and capitalism, within Europe and overseas. And it suggested that researchers scrutinize the particular economic, political, and cultural environments of the sending regions which created the propensity—or lack thereof—to migrate.

The book is organized into five sections which reflect—and test—Thistlethwaite's concerns. Part one deals with the macro-perspective on Atlantic migration. Menard underlines the continuity between the processes of immigration, opportunities, ethnic contact, assimilation, and the construction of a national identity during the colonial era and those of the later industrial era. Hoerder stresses the Atlantic labor market and the role of pressures and opportunities in the sending and receiving areas in producing seasonal, permanent or temporary, regional, intra-European or trans-oceanic migration. Decisions to migrate were informed, goal-directed and network-