

EXPANDING THE SMALL SPACE:
RASTAFARIANS AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCERS

Cathy S. Stanley

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived lives of 20 Rastafarians, whom I refer to as co-reasoners. Rastafarians have been defined as being members of a loosely organized religious-cultural movement that began in Jamaica in the 1930s as a response to the oppressive conditions in which they found themselves. There were 14 Rastamen and six Rastawomen, reflecting the male-dominance of the Rastafarian movement.

The study examined how cultural and spiritual teachings and practices of the Rastafarians in response to oppressive conditions, and how this has had an impact on the dominant Jamaica culture. Findings revealed the following six themes of the cultural and spiritual experiences as described by the co-reasoner's. Findings fell within two categories: identity and ideology. The themes in the identity categories are as following: 1) lens of know; 2) self-identity; 3) cultural identity; 4) collective identity. The themes for the Rastafarian ideology are 5) spiritual groundation and 6) traversing reality.

The question guiding this ethnographic study asked: How do Rastafarians impact the dominant Jamaica culture? And how do Rastafarians contribute to the discourse on emancipation and liberation practices? The study draws on several bodies of literature including Jamaican history, Rastafarian, adult education, and Transformation and Transcendence.

Cathy Stanley, Ed.D., Northeastern Illinois University, Social Work Program, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave, Chicago, IL. 60202.

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