

CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS: A STUDY IN ATTITUDE SIMILARITY AND CHANGE

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ABSTRACT. Attitudinal responses from a sample of Caribbean Black school students in Trinidad are compared with responses from West African Black students in English-speaking Gambia and with matched East Indian students from the other co-culture in Trinidad. Findings from open-ended questionnaires show the two Black samples to differ from the East Indian sample in the greater priority given to social concerns. Responses related to their initiative and goals in manipulating the environment show the Caribbean Black sample to exceed both the West African Black sample and the East Indian sample. Responses related to personality expansion show both the Caribbean Black sample and the East Indian sample to be more outgoing, secure, and realistic than the West African sample.

The discussion attributes some of these findings to the continuity of attitudes by culture of origin, and others to change induced by the richer physical and psychological opportunities of the Caribbean.

RESUMEN. Se comparan las respuestas actitudinales de dos muestras de estudiantes negros, en Trinidad y en Gambia, y de una tercer muestra de estudiantes Indio-orientales de Trinidad. Los resultados obtenidos indican que las dos muestras difieren de la muestra Indio-oriental en cuanto a la mayor prioridad otorgada a preocupaciones sociales. Las respuestas relacionadas con su iniciativa y objetivos al manipular el ambiente indican que la muestra de negros del Caribe excede tanto a la muestra de negros de África occidental (Gambia), como a la muestra Indio-oriental. Las respuestas relacionadas con la expansión de la personalidad indican que tanto la muestra de negros del Caribe como la muestra Indio-oriental son más abiertos, seguros de sí, y realistas que la muestra de África occidental.

La discusión atribuye algunos de estos hallazgos a la continuidad de actitudes por cultura de origen, y otras al cambio indicado por las oportunidades físicas y psicológicas más ricas del Caribe.

This is a study comparing Caribbean Blacks in Trinidad with West Africa Blacks in Gambia. These two groups derive from the general culture of West Africa which they shared before and during the New World importation of slaves in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries (Burton, 1868; Curtin, 1967; Hallett, 1965; Lander, 1830; Park, 1800; Wautier, 1966; Wilson, 1856). While both peoples were later forcibly colonized and ruled by the British, the West Africans have not only remained indigenous to their soil but also preserved much of their native custom. By comparison, the Caribbean Blacks have found themselves in a richer and faster developing environment. The present project has attempted to uncover some measure of the similarity of attitudes which the Caribbean group bears to the West Africans as well as indications of the change in attitudes produced by greater opportunity.

The East Indians, a subculture in Trinidad equal in socio-economic status and size (46% of the population) to the Caribbean Blacks (48% of the population), are included in this study in order to show which attitudes measured differ by culture of origin and which attitudes are part of the culture of residence. If culture of origin is determining, the Caribbean Black sample should measure differently from the East Indian sample and resemble the West African sample in response patterns. If culture of residence (Trinidad) is determining, the Caribbean Black sample should measure differently from the West African sample and not differ from their co-group, the East Indian sample.

East Indians were imported to Trinidad after the Blacks became free in order to provide a cheaper and more tractable labor force for the plantation economy. They were under such rigorous contract that conditions approximated slavery. Owners of estates bought their contracts, and the East Indians were not released until they had earned the expenses for their passage from India, plus an amount equal to their passage back, as well as the interim cost to the owner for maintaining their families in food, housing, and medical care. The East Indians were usually imported in the same slave ships formerly used for the African run and settled in shacks which had recently been vacated by the Blacks upon Emancipation. They were required to work from sunup to sundown, confined to their plantations and fined or flogged for misdemeanors (Nath, 1950). It took the East Indians an average of three generations to pay off the debt and often as much as seven or eight generations. Many East Indians were from the 'dark' stock in India and they did not interbreed with Trinidad whites (as have the Caribbean Blacks). In respect to darkness of skin both groups now somewhat resemble each other and are considered 'coloured' by the whites. Because of the many ways in which the Caribbean Blacks and East Indians have endured the same physical and psychological hardships, it would be reasonable to expect them to have a similar attitude structure. This, however, is not the case as indicated by the present findings as well as those of previous studies (Green, 1964; Green, 1965; Klass, 1961; Niehoff & Niehoff, 1960; Mischel, 1961).

PROCEDURE

Subjects. With the permission of the Ministry of Education, questionnaires were administered to the graduating class in the primary schools of Gambia and Trinidad. In Trinidad schools Caribbean Blacks and East Indians shared the same classrooms. All subjects spoke English. The average age was 10.6 years. The number of

CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS

subjects was 88 Caribbean Blacks, 102 West Africans, 61 East Indians. The East Indian sample was smaller because many East Indians have distrusted or disliked exposure of their children to western culture. Another reason is the greater use by East Indians of their children's labor which has kept school-age boys and girls busy helping with East Indian rice and market agriculture.

Questionnaire. Printed sheets, designated as a *Survey of Student Opinion*, contained open-ended questions with blank spaces for completion. Pre-testing had shown the material to take approximately the time of one class period. Beyond distribution and collection, the questionnaire was self-administering and designed to draw frank answers through anonymity. The teacher was given a typed card with which to introduce the experimenter: "Dr. Green is making this survey in many parts of the world. Do not write your name on the paper. Dr. Green will collect the sheets and no one here in Gambia (or Trinidad) will be allowed to see them."

Compilation. Pretesting had indicated the general range of responses for each question. These were reduced to pro and con categories for those questions requesting a single response. Multiple responses, requested on several questions, were reduced to a few large categories. A subject was then tallied in the category which had the largest number of his responses.

Coding was done blind by three psychology graduate students and tested for reliability.

Probability levels were determined by a t-test of proportions or means .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results on Table 1 are from those questions on which Caribbean Blacks and West African Blacks *did not differ* in responses whereas both samples differed from the East Indians. Five questions had findings at the .01 or .001 level. These results will be discussed as indicating attitudes which appear to be closer together in the two Black samples than those provided by the East Indian sample.

The five measures grouped into Table 1 could be subsumed within an attitude termed 'social priority,' i.e., social weight of interests, activities and references. The degree to which social involvement is a compelling orientation can be seen in the nature of preferences conducive to happiness, tension under group scrutiny, concern with loyalty, and the degree to which other persons are seen as causal to one's performance. On these measures there occurred no demonstrable differences between the two Black samples (CAB and WAB) whereas they both had strong differences from the East In-

TABLE 1

No Differences between Caribbean and West African Blacks,
with Differences from East Indians

N: Caribbean Blacks (CAB) = 88; West African Blacks (WAB) = 102;
East Indians (EI) = 61

Question and pro category	% diff.		p	% diff.		p	% diff.		p			
	CAB	WAB		CAB	EI		WAB	EI				
I would be happiest to have....												
Pro: Intangibles (vs. tangibles)	42	49	7	NS	42	25	17	.001	49	25	19	.001
I would be happiest to do.....												
Pro: Social activities (vs. solitary ones)	23	22	1	NS	23	14	9	.01	22	14	8	.04
When I am up before the class, I usually.....												
Pro: feel or act worried (vs. confident)	71	64	7	NS	71	48	23	.01	64	48	16	.05
I would distrust anyone who....												
Pro: was disloyal (vs. fights, steals, etc.)	58	46	12	NS	58	20	38	.001	46	20	26	.02
Reason for my poorest school mark last year.....												
Pro: caused by others (vs. self-blame)	47	43	4	NS	47	24	23	.01	43	23	20	.02

dian sample (EI). The explanation for this non-difference between the two Black samples may lie in the similarity between attitudes involved in present-day tribal life in West Africa and attitudes held over from the slavery life of Blacks in the Caribbean. In both situations, work and recreation occur in large groups wherein the individual achieves nothing beyond the acceptance and respect of his fellow men for his sharing, understanding and social sensitivity. The main aim is to avoid ostracism and to maximize one's inclusiveness through geniality and conformity to the group norms. The East Indians, in contrast, segregated themselves more privately by caste behavior, earned freedom, and presently by interest in unshared material gains.

In completing the statement "I would be happiest to have . . .," a larger proportion of both Black samples preferred intangible items with social reference. The opposite code category of tangible preferences included money, food, articles of transport (wagon, bike), play and house equipment. The rank order of intangible categories for both Black groups was:

CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS

1. Time-with-specific persons (example: friends, relatives, dead mother alive, sweetheart).
2. Status (example: an honor, school certificate, general success).
3. Endowments (example: good singing voice, smaller chin, ability in mathematics).
4. Events (example: celebration, party, outing, religious ceremony).

The next question 'I would be happiest to do . . . ' drew from both Black groups a greater number of activities-with-people in contradistinction to solitary activities. Activities which involved persons only incidentally to the main emphasis were counted in non-social categories. For instance, 'play dominoes' was counted as intrinsically a social activity whereas 'play football' was counted as an exercise activity and 'record a song' was counted as a construction activity.

The third question, as to how one behaves when under class scrutiny, showed that a great majority of both Black samples were uneasy as to whether or not their behavior would be acceptable. Adequacy here appears to depend on the opinion of the teacher or class rather than on self-assurance and self-confidence. Typical answers were 'I don't like it,' 'I feel backward,' 'I wish I was not there,' 'I can't talk right,' 'I fear the teacher be vexed.' The answers which were not counted in this category of uneasy reactions were those which showed less temerity: 'I do my best,' 'I show off,' 'I speak right up,' 'I stand very tall.'

The fourth question, 'I would distrust anyone who . . . , ' had for both Black samples a surprisingly large response category having to do with personal disloyalty. It appears that a significant number of Blacks would reject (or suspect) someone whose loyalty to them was questionable. This suggests that disloyalty or low social cohesion is a factor to be reckoned with among these two Black groups, and that other forms of aggression are not as important.

The final question, 'The reason for my poorest school mark last year was . . . , ' returned twice as many in the two Black samples as in the East Indian sample who attributed the cause of failure to circumstances in the control of others. Typical answers were 'my father made me help in the garden,' 'my seat was too far in the back,' 'the teacher doesn't explain it well,' 'I didn't have a book.' The opposite category, chosen by 77% of the East Indians, was largely intro-punitive: 'I didn't study hard enough,' 'I find mathematics very difficult,' 'I fooled too much.'

In the Black samples there is general anxiety about malevolence shown by the high incidence of both disloyalty concern and external attributions of failure. These findings imply a low expectation of

mastery over one's own fate, and are in line with the frequently reported readiness of these two cultures to translate social insecurity into jealousy or belief in magical practices (Cohen, 1955; Courlander, 1961; Field, 1940, 1960; Herskovits & Herskovits, 1947; Jahoda, 1966; Marwick, 1965; Sereno, 1948; Weinstein, 1962).

The results on Table 2 are from those questions on which Caribbean Blacks and West African Blacks *differ* from each other, and the Caribbean Blacks differ from the East Indians (as do the West Africans on some questions). Four questions had findings at the .03 to .001 level. These results will be discussed as indicating attitudes by which the Caribbean Blacks have progressed differently from the West African Blacks and also differ from their matched subculture, the East Indians.

TABLE 2

Differences between Caribbean Blacks, West African Blacks, and East Indians
 N: Caribbean Blacks (CAB) = 88; West African Blacks (WAB) = 102;
 East Indians (EI) = 61

Question and pro category	%		diff.	p	%		diff.	p	%		diff.	p
	CAB	WAB			CAB	EI			WAB	EI		
I would be happiest to do.....												
Pro: Construction activity (vs. all other activities)	36	18	18	.001	36	29	7	.10	18	29	11	.02
When the work gets too hard, I.....												
Pro: leave it	51	21	30	.001	51	31	20	.02	21	31	10	NS
Pro: try harder, get help	32	23	9	NS	32	39	7	NS	23	39	16	.05
Pro: feel blocked, do nothing	17	56	39	.001	17	30	13	.07	56	30	26	.01
I would be happiest to do.....												
Pro: Schooling & reading (vs. all other categories)	8	39	31	.001	8	26	18	.001	39	26	13	NS
Pro: Dance or make music (vs. all other categories)	13	3	10	.001	13	4	9	.01	3	4	1	NS
I would be happiest to have.....												
Pro: money (vs. all other categories)	3	11	8	.001	3	8	5	.03	11	5	6	NS

The questions grouped on Table 2 could be said to indicate attitudes about the deployment of one's energies in relation to the physical environment. The first question, 'I would be happiest to do', had a category of activities showing a desire to make things (construction activity). Here it will be seen that the Caribbean Blacks are twice as inclined toward manipulative activity as the West

CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS

African Blacks. This suggests that there is more impetus among Caribbean Blacks for doing something which is intended to effect a change of some kind. While most responses indicated constructive projects, it could also be argued that a need for variety is reflected here, as well as the energy to seek it actively. It can further be inferred that individuals in the Caribbean Black sample felt more capable and confident than the West African Blacks or the East Indians. It may be that manipulation or approval for experimental activity directed toward change has been more open to Caribbean Blacks (Smith, 1956) and consequently they view it more positively. This has, indeed, been the case because Caribbean Blacks were free upon Emancipation to move into the developing economy through small trades and services, earlier education, and earlier qualification for the needed posts of a rapidly expanding administration.

The West Africans and the East Indians are peoples dedicated to tradition—that is, repetition of the behavior of their predecessors is viewed favorably. The West Africans were not dispersed from their native environment which has altered little between the past and the present. Hence old ways are, in many cases, still the best ways for the circumstances, and customs have not tended to change. The Caribbean Blacks, since the time of their introduction to a new land and a new way of life, have had new institutions and techniques either forced upon them or made available to them. Christianity, British law, British education, commercial sophistication, attention to health and hygiene, welfare care, etc., are only some of the new aspects to which they have been accustomed. The East Indians have been exposed to these modern developments also. However, they have had three anchors in tradition which were removed from the Caribbean Blacks: (1) the right to their religious practices (Hindu and Moslem), (2) non-separation of family members, and (3) the self-containment residual from former caste behavior. The minutiae of caste observances have disappeared, although consciousness of ancestor membership still forms the basis of much social stratification among East Indians (Klass, 1961; Niehoff & Niehoff, 1962).

The next question, 'When the work gets too hard, I . . . ,' had three answer categories. The largest percentage of responses from the Caribbean Black sample fell in the category 'leave it.' This suggests a mobility of interest toward other things or a shift away from frustrating conditions. The tendency is to invest energy elsewhere when the present expenditure does not bring returns. Whether this suggests a mature autonomy or intolerance of frustration is not clear. The second category of answers to this question about frustrating work had replies implying that the subject would try harder to bring

the work to completion. Here the Caribbean Black sample was only slightly less bent on sticking with it than the East Indians. The third category of reactions to work that is too hard had a small percentage of the Caribbean Black sample responding that they felt stopped or blocked by the tension of frustration. This kind of response had a heavy percentage of the West African sample who would neither go on with the project nor relax enough to leave it. Fifty-nine percent of the West African sample said they reacted passively to thwarting, i.e., they let inertia set in.

Considering the first two questions together, the West African sample was low in preference for the making of things and low in initiative under stress. This may be a product in West Africa of the general poverty level, the low protein diet, and the lack of vitamins (Van der Plas, 1956). Or it may derive from the cultural despondency produced by conflict over the validity of western educational goals (Mason, 1967; Wauthier, 1966). Another explanation may lie in the fact that most work in West Africa is collective. Projects are undertaken by the compound, age-set, or community as a group endeavor. The pace is adjusted to accommodate most of the participants—those who outstrip others must help the few who fall behind. Thus someone comes to the aid of those who find the work too hard. Nobody takes individual credit for starting or completing work. In the Caribbean, however, the Blacks had, after Emancipation, much less communal work because the social structure for it was lacking.

The last two questions refer to categories with rather small frequencies. The material is included here because it may be indicative (because of significant differences) of the disillusionment of the Caribbean Black with the conventional ladder-to-success values of education and money. Answers to 'I would be happiest to do . . . ' had a low incidence of 'school and reading' replies and a higher incidence of preference for 'dancing and making music.' In a small way, this is a rejection by the Caribbean Blacks of education in favor of the benefits of recreation through rhythmic involvement (Frielich, 1961; Green, 1970; Simey, 1956). The finding is surprising by comparison with the West African Blacks who appear to have much interest in education with little mention of their great involvement in the musical arts. It may be that, because the West African respondents were in school and schooling is a rare opportunity for relatively few West Africans, it is therefore more of a privilege. By comparison, many more of the Caribbean Blacks have been provided with a primary education. Nevertheless this sample did not value it to the extent that the East Indian sample did. The latter people have a widespread hope that it will lead them to a better life. In this con-

CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS

nection it is interesting to refer to Table 1, wherein the first question shows the East Indian sample to be more interested in tangible possessions ('I would be happiest to have . . .').

The last question on Table 2 measures the desire for money, and the finding is that the Caribbean Black sample was not interested in money as much as the other two groups. Money is a relatively new concept to West Africans who see what it can do for the white man without themselves having much experience with it. The East Indians literally earned their freedom from indentured servitude and are tremendously interested in money.

In summary, the findings of this data are a minor indication that the Caribbean Blacks in comparison with West African Blacks and East Indians are enterprising and various in activity interests which, however, do not lead them toward a strong investment in education or money benefits. With the improved environment and increasing exposure to the western ethic of cumulative resources, they are not espousing the related values. Other studies confirm these tendencies of Caribbean Blacks to initiate and diversify behavior without becoming exclusively oriented toward materialism (Frielich, 1961; Simey, 1946; R. K. Smith, 1956).

TABLE 3

Differences between Caribbean Blacks and West African Blacks, with No Differences between Caribbean Blacks and East Indians
 N = Caribbean Blacks (CAB) = 88; West African Blacks (WAB) = 102; East Indians (EI) = 61

Question and Pro Category	%		diff.	p	%		diff.	p
	CAB	WAB			CAB	EI		
Number of true friends _____	4.76 (=M)	2.84 (=M)	1.92	.01	4.76 (=M)	4.27 (=M)	.49	NS
This would upset me most.....								
Pro: harm to self (vs. others)	42	66	24	.01	42	44	2	NS
These are the bad things I might do....								
Pro: physical or verbal aggression (vs. covert)	48	28	20	.001	48	53	5	NS
I would be happiest to do.....								
Pro: physical exercise (vs. all other activities)	22	10	12	.001	22	21	1	NS
Age old enough to be a good parent _____	26.79 yrs (=M)	32.38 yrs (=M)	5.59 yrs	.001	26.75 yrs (=M)	28.08 yrs (=M)	1.29 yrs	NS
Future job choice								
Pro: salaried job (vs. entrepreneurial)	72	43	29	.001	72	61	11	NS
I would be happiest to have								
Pro: success (vs. all other desires)	8	16	8	.001	8	4	4	NS

The results on Table 3 are from those questions on which Caribbean Blacks and West African Blacks *differ* from each other, whereas the Caribbean Blacks do not differ from the East Indians. Seven questions had findings at the .01 to .001 level. These results will be discussed as indicating attitudes in which the Caribbean Blacks have progressed differently from the West African Blacks and yet not differently from their matched subculture, the East Indians.

Table 3 has the measures in which the Caribbean Black sample differed from the West African Black sample but not from the matched sample of East Indians from their co-culture in Trinidad. In general the findings for both Caribbean samples indicate development beyond the West African sample in the direction of greater personality expansion. The Caribbean subjects were more outgoing, aggressive, active, confident, secure, and realistic than the West African sample. In these respects, the Caribbean Black sample had no significant difference from the East Indian group. The relative freedom from tradition-bound concepts and practices, afforded by transplantation whether from Africa or from India, seems to have opened new channels of personal development for both Trinidad groups.

The more outgoing nature of Caribbean students (Black or East Indian) may be seen in the findings from the question about the number of true friends where they averaged 4.76 and 4.27 respectively as against the West African average of 2.84. The next question also contributes to the impression of greater outgoing interest: in answer to 'What would upset you most if it were to happen?' only 42% of the Caribbean Black sample and 44% of the East Indians, as compared with 66% of West Africans, gave items specifying harm to themselves (example, cut hand, fail exams, lose bike) and had more items about disasters to others (example, mother die, father go to jail, sister run over). In contrast, sixty-six percent of the West African Black sample thought first of themselves. There is here the suggestion that both Caribbean Black samples were more fearful for their dear ones and, by inference, more confident that they could handle injury to themselves.

Another indication of more outgoing attitudes in the Caribbean samples is their freer admission of the impulse to aggression. About half of them responded with forms of physical and verbal aggression in the sentence completion for 'These are the bad things I might do, that I have to hold back hardest from doing' West African Blacks had only twenty-eight percent of overtly aggressive responses. Most of their self-proscriptions were minor in degree—for example, tardiness in obeying, neglect of chores or not showing proper respect for their elders. This lack of aggression in the West African sample

CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS

is congruent with the pattern of crime in Gambia where the police records showed remarkably few major crimes over a five-year period. Most sentences were for stealing, embezzlement, and smuggling. Juvenile delinquency in Gambia was mainly concerned with runaways, sleeping on private premises or minor damage to public property. In contrast, the Trinidad police records for Caribbean adult Blacks showed a high incidence of fights and disturbance of the peace, and the centers for the care of juvenile delinquents in Trinidad had a predominance of Caribbean Blacks detained for generally unruly conduct. (In contrast, many of the East Indian adult prisoners had been charged with premeditated crimes or brutally explosive ones, and the juveniles of stealthy misdemeanors.)

A minor finding which further indicates the outgoing nature of both Trinidad samples was the vitality shown by their pleasure in physical exercise. A significant percentage of them reported that they 'would be happiest to do' some form of sport or outdoor recreation. Better infant care, better food, and better general health underlie this difference with West Africans.

Willingness to undertake the urgencies and responsibilities of life must be considered a facet of expanded personality structure, despite the need for maturity and caution inherent in postponement. Self-confidence is indicated in the results for the question 'When do you think you will be old enough to be a good parent?' Caribbean subjects estimated an average of four or five years younger than the average from the West African sample. In West Africa, the payment of a heavy bride-price is a conventional brake to the early marriage of young men. And it is said there that young women are often reluctant to assume the responsibility for food provision and trading which is incumbent on them with marriage and child-bearing. Life before the role of parenthood is considered in West Africa to be a time of greater freedom and pleasure.

Answers to the question about future job choice had 72% of the Caribbean Blacks and 61% of the East Indians (as against 43% of West African Blacks) choosing salaried employment in business (example, clerks, typists), administration (civil service, police), teaching or nursing. The contrast category was entrepreneurial in preference for self-employment (farmer, plumber, mechanic, doctor, lawyer, musician). The discrepancy between the Caribbean samples and West African Black sample is due to the few salaried openings which are available in West Africa where most people still till the earth. An aspiration level of 43% of West African students who hoped for salaried employment is highly unrealistic because less than 10% of these teenagers would eventually find such jobs to fill. The last ques-

GREEN

tion about 'happiest to have . . . ' had a category of responses desiring success which also shows more West Africans unrealistically attracted to glory.

In summary, this study has assembled some evidence about similarity and change of attitudes in two Black samples. Three directions seem to be indicated: first, a number of responses related to high social priority showed both Black samples to be different from the East Indians whereas they were not different from each other. Their cultural continuity from a common West African past is assumed to underlie this similarity of response pattern. Second, some responses related to environmental initiative and goals showed the Caribbean Black sample to differ from both the West African and the East Indian sample. Greater rapidity of change in physical and psychological surroundings and the earlier opportunities given Caribbean Blacks are assumed to account for these differences. Third, some responses related to personality expansion showed the Caribbean Black sample to be ahead of the West African sample but not different from the East Indian sample. In this respect the two samples from transplanted cultures were more outgoing, secure and realistic than the indigenous West African sample.

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CARIBBEAN BLACKS AND WEST AFRICAN BLACKS

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