

https://dspace.org/

Attitudes of Africans to Whites

Dubb, A. A.

1975-08-05
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/8686

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW
4.00pm AUGUST 1975

Title: Attitudes of Africans to Whites.

by: A A Dubb

No. 032

ATTITUDES OF AFRICANS TO WHITES

A.A. DUBB

INTRODUCTION

It has been postulated[1] that the greater the barriers between groups - or, more specifically, ethnic groups - the greater the tendency for stereotypes to be generalized. In such stereotyping, in other words, not only are individual differences between group members ignored, but also differences between sub-categories within the larger group. It would seem unnecessary to labour the point that in South Africa barriers between Black and White tend to be well-defined, widely-ramifying and, in many aspects, largely impermeable.

These barriers are entrenched in both law and convention and are, furthermore, reflected in a important way in intergroup attitudes.[2] Given this situation, then, one would expect that White sterotypes of Blacks and Black stereotypes of Whites would tend to be highly generalized with little or no differentation being made between sub-groups comprising the whole. In fact, this hypotheses appears to be supported with regard to White attitudes to Blacks by v.d. Berghe[3], who found that Blacks were generally regarded as being pretty much all the same.

An early paper by Machone[4] in which he was investigating African reaction to domination, indicated however, that - African stereotypes of Whites were not quite so generalized - in fact, his data show, very definite distinctions were made between different categories of Whites, notably between English and Afrikaans-speakers. What was interesting was that the content of the stereotypes referred primarily to the way in which each of the White groups were perceived to regard Africans and to treat them in actual situations. Quite apart from Machrone's own conclusions relating to African's responses to domination, his data reflects on an assertion by Oliver Cox[5] that in a dominant-subordinate relationship between two groups, the dominant group will tend to view their subordinates as objects of exploitation and

that stereotypes will relate to this dimension. Since members of the subordinate group are relegated to positions of low status, low skill and minimal responsibility, a general stereotype of their limited capabilities predominates both as a justification for their enforced subordination and as sufficient explanation for individual failure to fulfill dominant group expectations. Members of the subordinate group, however, must at least try in every possible way to minimize their suffering, to ease their lot, to facilitate adjustment. They learn therefore to distinguish between dominant group members whose attitudes appear to be less unfavourable, who perhaps have moral qualms, whose treatment of subordinates is less harsh and more sympathetic. Where these differences between dominant group members are purely individual, the search for more "gentle oppressers" is a fortutous hit-and-miss affair. However, it is possible that experience suggests that certain categories or sub-groups within the dominant group tend to be more favourably disposed and in such a case the subordinate group may tend to develope different stereotypes which not only point up differences, but also set up a general level of expectations. Differential stereotyping for subordinate groups, then, is, in a sence, a matter of survival.

THE AIM OF THE PAPER

The aim of the present paper is to test the hypothesis, derived from Cox, that in South AFrica Africans would be expected to distinguish in their stereotypes, between various sub-groups within the total White group, notwithstanding the rigid barriers existing between the two groups. Furthermore, it is postulated, the content of these stereotypes will relate primarily to perceived attitudes towards and treatment of subordinate group members. A secondary but interesting aim of the paper is to discover whether any fundamental changes in African stereotypes of Whites have occured during the thirty years between Machrones study and the present one.

Sampling and Procedure

A schedule consisting of seven open-ended questions in addition to a limited number relating to personal details of respondents, was administered by a female graduate AFrican research assistant to an accidental sample of 40 Africans. Most interviews were conducted in the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, but a few were obtained in Soweto. The basic characteristics of the sample are given in Tables 1 a, b, c, and d.

It should be emphasized that neither the method of drawing the sample nor its characteristics permit wide-range valid generalization of results. It is doubtful however, given the delicate nature of the enquiry (i.e. Black attitudes to Whites) whether a truly random sample would have been successful since a high refusal rate might have been anticipated.(6) The value of the present sample lies primarily in providing information about the range of possible responses rather than as an indication of the frequency with which any particular response might be expected to occur. This should be born in mind particularly when some of the findings are presented quantitatively.

Some comments should be made regarding the structure of the schedule and the wording of the questions. Although questions were open-ended, their wording was quite specific. Questions were:-

1. Do Africans distinguish between other groups - particularly between groups in the White population? How aware are AFricans of divisions and differences in the White population?
2. Which groups do they feel are most favourably disposed towards them and why?
3. Which groups do they feel are least favourably disposed towards them and why?
4. Which groups are most favourably regarded by the respondent and why?
5. Which groups are least favourably regarded by the respondent and why?

TABLE 1a SEX

SEX	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
No.	28	12	40

TABLE 1b AGE

AGE	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	?	TOTAL
NO	4	13	5	11	5	2	40

TABLE 1c OCCUPATION

OCCUPATION	NO.
Labourer	2
Cleaner	3
Messenger	5
Laboratory Assistant	11
White collar worker	9
Teacher	1
Nurse	6
Professional or Managerial	2
Housewife	1
TOTAL	40

TABLE 1d EDUCATION

Education	Grade 1-Std.3	4-7	J.C.	Pre-Matric Diploma.	Matric	Post Matric Diploma	Grad.	?	TOTAl
No.	5	3	13	4	9	2	2	2	40

6. What groups do they feel exploit them most, oppress them, discriminate and are prejudiced against them?

7. What groups do they feel are most helpful to Africans as individuals or as a group?

While some or all of the questions may be criticized for being too pointed and too directed and, hence, as leading, it should be pointed out that some respondents did not recognize different categories of Whites and that the questions did not prompt them to do so. In any case, the pros and cons of more or less subtle questions can be debated endlessly.

RESULTS

In answer to the first question thirty six of the forty respondents distinguished between English and Afrikaans-speaking Whites and of these nine also mentioned Jews. In addition, many respondents cited political differences between Whites, and a few added such criteria as wealth, religion and education.

Apart from those respondents who, after acknowledging obvious ethnic differences, simply replied to subsequent questions that all Whites were the same in relation to Africans, almost all other respondents stereotyped Whites ethnically though some respondents added political and/or economic characteristics.

Responses to the question on which groups were perceived as being most favourably disposed towards Africans, ranged from Afrikaans, to English to Jews, with the majority regarding the latter two groups as being most friendly. However, several respondents suggested that while English-speakers are more sympathetic they only appear to like the African, whereas in fact they actually hate them. The English then are generally regarded as being favourably disposed - but also as being insincere, hypocritical and untrustworthy. The Afrikaners were in general regarded as being especially hostile to Africans - a fact which was demonstrated by their harshness in dealing with Africans, their "baas" mentality and the anti African laws enforced by the (Afrikaner) National Government.

It is interesting that when asked which groups they, the respondents felt most warmly disposed to, their responses were frequently contrary to first expectations. Thus while English-speakers were believed to be more favourably disposed towards Africans than Afrikaners, many respondents preferred Afrikaners because they were at least honest and open in their hatred whereas with English-speakers "one never knew where one stood". Stereotypes then seemed to comprise two main components: degree of dislike for Africans and consequent treatment, and the sincerity of expressed attitudes and behaviour. In deciding which group was preferable to deal with, one or other component would take precedence. Thus some respondents preferred the English because they behaved more considerately and less harshly even though they were really insincere, while others were prepared to take their chances with the more predictable Afrikaners.

There were respondents, however, who while differentiating stereotypically between the two main White groups were themselves unfavourably disposed towards all Whites.

Of all White groups, however, the most favourable stereotypes were of Jews - tolerant, sympathetic, pay good wages, treat Africans like human beings, liberal politically, and so on. One respondent, however, commented that like the English, Jews only <u>appeared</u> well-disposed in order to exploit Africans more effectively. Nevertheless, even among those who had not specifically stereotyped Jews, there were several who indicated that they felt best-disposed towards that group.

In this particular sample, Afrikaners were the least favoured and most oppressive group and this was consistent with their generally negative stereotype. At the same time it was acknowledged even by a few who disliked Afrikaners, that Afrikaners had in fact been most helpful to Africans. On the whole, however, English-speakers in general, and Jews in particular

were regarded as being most helpful to Africans in the fields of education, welfare, charitability and general uplift. A few also mentioned that only these White were prepared to assist Africans politically.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the data confirms our hypothesis that AFricans do distinguish between different categories of Whites and that these differences are perceived primarily in relation to their apparent attitudes and behaviour towards Africans. Thus although Edelstein found other types of characteristics by using the stereotype check list, the present open-ended techniqu elicited almost entirely responses related to ethnic relations. This was similar to the experience of Machrone, referred to previously. At this point it may be interpretated that in pursuance of the second aim of this paper - to discover any changes of attitudes in the 30 years between Machrone's study and the present one - we may say that little or no change is apparent. Even though the data were collected by means of quite different techniques, stereotypes of English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans appear to have remained unchanged. This is similar to findings by Machrone( ) and Melamid( ) with regard to race attitudes of White South AFrican students over a long period of time, which also showed little change. Thus while the political and economic situation has changed in many ways inter-ethnic relations have not - Whites still wish to maintain political supremacy and social separation, while Blacks still see Whites as oppressors and therefore as obstacles to the realization of personal ambition for advancement and self realization.

Returning to the main issue, it is suggested that the content of Black stereotypes of Whites is determined by the most important dimension of Black-White relations, from their point of view - i.e. the minimization of sub-ordinate groups suffering by recognizing relevant characteristics of dominant group members. For most respondents these characteristics were not idiosyncratic but

linked to particular White sub-groups which defined certain basic expectations. The stereotypes were, in turn, translated into guides for behaviour inasmuch as they provided a basis for Africans to choose between one group and another. Where stereotypes were overlaid or modified by the feeling that differences within the White group were minor ones and did not affect attitudes to or treatment of Africans, then they provided no guide for behaviour, expectations, adjustment or choice.

To conclude, then, we may say that the hypothesis is confirmed.

NOTES It is hoped to supply a list of notes and bibliographical references at the meeting.

APPENDIX The sample responses that are appended are not "typical", but are simply examples of the kinds of response obtained and some of the relationships between stereotypes and own preferences. The numbers preceeding each response refer to the questions which are reproduced at pages 3 - 4 above.

QUESTION 1

They do distinguish. After all we are not the same with them. There are Jews, English, French etc. It is because of language differences and what we eventually find out about them, that they French or Italian or the case may be.

QUESTION 2

The English through we have now discovered that they are not honest but we used to believe that they were better.
An Englishman may act as if he likes you, but inside his heart he does not like you.

QUESTION 3

Afrikaners hate us. For example : for an African to use a cup that an Afrikaner regards as his own is an offence. He (Afrikaner) would never use that cup again.

QUESTION 4

English - I prefer them, I do not really like them. At least they do not show their hostility openly.

QUESTION 5

Afrikaners and because they hate us. They treat us badly.
They have withdrawn exemption certificates and given us "bibles" - "Dom" pass i.e. reference book.

QUESTION 6

Afrikaners - they play the fool with us and treat us like animals. Once you make the mistake of touching them accidentally, they rub themselves off as if it is dirt and not a person who has touched them. They oppress us through their laws; discriminate and are prejudiced against us.

QUESTION 7

Jews help us. They are not like the Afrikaners.After all- like us. They do not have the land and do not make laws.

QUESTION 1

They do distinguish between groups e.g. when an AFrican has had pleasant experiences with one group they tend to generalise their feelings about the whole group. They are however, aware of the divisions and differences because of the languages spoken and accounts in speaking these languages.

QUESTION 2

The English-speaking group - they are friendlier to Africans because they sympathise with us as the underdogs.

QUESTION 3

The Afrikaans and the Germans. Their general racial attitudes are hostile towards Africans. It could perhaps be due to the fact that they place a lot of value in military strength. Even their women are hostile towards the African and their physical built looks tough and strong.
The Italians and other immigrant groups who own fruit and vegetable shops are even worse than the local whites and the respondent hates them.

QUESTION 4

Afrikaners are the best because they are true to their feelings. If they hate you they will show you. Whereas the English group butter their feelings and wrap their feelings up in cotton-wool and pretend to like you grinning to you instead of smiling.

QUESTION 5

This depends on the whole on the individuals, for you find some English people who exploit African labour to the full while they pretend to like them and appreciate their work without paying them any better. Whereas there are other AFrikaner people who are kind and goodhearted and they treat Africans humanly.

QUESTION 6

The Afrikaners through the laws of apartheid to all there things.

QUESTION 7

The English are very helpful as groups or individuals, e.g. Race Relations Black Sash, and the different churches are very concerned about the Apartheid set-up

QUESTION 1.

YES, of the white group we distinguish English from AFrikaans speaking; also there is now the third distinguished group of white foreigners commonly called "Greeks" because of their hostility towards the africans especially at Cafes and (ever green gardens - green-grocers)

QUESTION 2

Except for a few individual and personal aquantances I feel there is no other group that is favourably disposed towards us.

QUESTION 3

The group population can lest be tabulated as ff. in order of their unfavourableness.

Afrikaans Speaking - Because they are simply "Bosses" they want to be respected for no obvious status but simply that they are WHITE. No African would hate honouring an honourable man.

The Colourds. in the Tvl. and Natal over 60% of them are our cousins but they have such an unbearable self-esteem like their fathers the "Afrikaaners" some even go to such extreems of calling Africans "Kaffirs".

The English - Whilst they are logical people they tend to "flow with the "WHITE" stream" but individually they are fine people and do give respect to a respectable man.

The Indians - They are a sociable people provided that they can class you and it is more comfortable in their mist.

QUESTION 4

The Indians (as in Question 3).

QUESTION 5

The Afrikaans speaking (as in Question 3)

QUESTION 6

The Afrikaans speaking - not because we already have an inborn antipathy but because they continue to enforce their "Baaskap" very much unreasonably.

QUESTION 7

The English speaking, they educate and display what civilization is, and thus raise the standard of living for the African who is always ready to copy what is respectable from the WHITE man.

QUESTION 1

Whites all the same - differ only as individuals.

QUESTION 2

Jews treat Africans better and pay them well as employers.

QUESTION 3

Africaners - because of the laws of the country which are anti-African.

QUESTION 4

The Jews are good employers and treat us as human beings. They also help us alot.

QUESTION 5

Afrikaners because they want to make slaves of us.

QUESTION 6

The Afrikaners do all these things through the laws of the country

QUESTION 7

Jews and English as individual employers they are also behind most welfare organisations.

QUESTION 1

They are all the same to me. In any case. Africans are aware of the differences and divisions because of language differences and they have stereotypes about these groups.

QUESTION 2

Anything white I hate, because they think they are better than us, just because of the colour of their skins. Whites do not also like us, they just retend to.

QUESTION 3

The Afrikaners are the worst, because of the way they treat us. They want their presence to be felt at all times, and to show that they are better than us.

QUESTION 4

I hate all Whites.

QUESTION 5

-

QUESTION 6

Afrikaners exploit Africans - the Government is dominated by the Afrikaners and they pass all the laws to discriminate and exploit African labour and underpay them, oppress them and terribly prejudiced against them.

QUESTION 7

Whites as a whole are not helpful to Africans because even though they give out such help as bursaries, but the economic system in this country is engineered to make the African dependent on the whites because of poverty; and Whites in South Africa support this government through majority rule. If there was no job representation and there was equal pay for equal work than this would not be the case.

QUESTION 1

They do distinguish between White ethnic groups and the English speaking groups and Afrikaans speaking groups (The two main white groups in South Africa) language differences and are obvious ways of making distinctions.

QUESTION 2

Is there really any group that likes us. The English are sly and pretend to like us.
There are Afrikaaners who really like us and there are those who hate us openly.
Jews also pretend to like us, so as to promote their businesses when dealing with us as customers.

QUESTION 3

The English do not honestly like us. Some Afrikaaners hate us and are open about it.

QUESTION 4 & 5

There is no particular group I like. I dont care for them at all. I only care for them because I have to work for them and they rule us.

QUESTION 6

The Afrikaaners oppress us through their laws. But you find some Afrikaaners that are really good (as individuals).

QUESTION 7

Although the English are (what they are - sly and pretend a lot) they try to help us a lot so that we may think that they are good to us and therefore help us.