

SOCIAL SEPARATION, GROUP FORMATION AND COHESION

SOCIAL SEPARATION, GROUP FORMATION AND COHESION:  
A STUDY OF  
WEST INDIAN STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

By  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the social phenomena of social separation, group formation and cohesion among West Indian students at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. It explores and analyses the factors which come together to foster and produce a relatively cohesive group of students, operating in a "foreign" environment. These factors are, (1) West Indian perception of the way Canadians feel about them, (2) West Indian perception of Cultural differences between themselves and Canadians, (3) West Indian awareness and perception of their similarities in a foreign setting, and (4) The desire of West Indians to associate with others of like kind.

This process of social separation, group formation and cohesion occurs despite the heterogenous character of the societal backgrounds from which these students come.

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## INTRODUCTION

Studies done on ethnic group formation and cohesion usually conclude that the process of group formation and cohesion comes about because of the negative nature of majority/minority group relations since as Wirth states, "the existence of a minority in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group enjoying higher social status and greater privileges." (1957:6). Sociologists like Wirth, (1957:6) Kramer, (1970:6), and Williams (1957) agree that ethnic groups are formed and operate cohesively because of the treatment meted out to them by the majority or dominant group. Williams' definition of minority infers this:

A racial or cultural minority may thus be viewed for the present purpose as a collection of persons who by token of shared physical properties or cultural characteristics are regarded by other members of some larger collectivity, within whose power system they live, as different and as an object of out-group sentiment, (1957:425).

Kramer explains:

A minority group situation comes about when two social systems are no longer external to each other. The minority group begins to compete for status within the dominant stratification system and is debarred categorically. The minority situation is thus truly a matter of "when people meet" and not of mere co-existence, peaceful or otherwise. The relationship between the dominant and minority group obviously implies contact. Insofar as there is competition for values, this

contact usually leads to conflict, the resolution of such conflict is some form of accommodation that imposes upon the minority an acceptance of its subordination. (1970:6).

These two descriptions of intergroup relations which result in minority group formation omit completely the notion of differences among group members. It is assumed that once inter-group conflict or differences occur, a separation of a cohesively operating group will result. Such an assumption neglects or pays only limited attention to the factors which must be present and which would be responsible for the cohesion of heterogeneous groups of people. Yao (1975), in her study of Chinese students found that separation from the dominant group did not constitute the basis for the formation of a homogeneous Chinese group of students since there was no important enough tie which bound the Chinese students together. Glazer and Moynihan found some social differentiation among Blacks in New York City. This differentiation was based on whether the Blacks had come to the city from southern United States or through immigration from the West Indies. (1970:35).

In another vein Sociologists like Shibutani and Kwan (1965) and G.W. Allport (1958) contend that the important factor in group formation and cohesion is the perception of similarities among people. These scholars affirm that people of like kind who perceive themselves as similar usually associate with each other to a degree enough to foster group formation and cohesion. Using this theoretical orientation Banfield, analyzing ethnic enclaves in Boston, declared that Blacks in



Washington Park lived in this ghetto because they preferred to be among people whose lifestyle was similar to their own. (1970:80-83). While this observation might be valid, Banfield's analysis pays little attention to the social relations between Blacks in the ghetto and the rest of the society. The result therefore, is one sided reasoning. Scholars who analyse group formation and cohesion using this kind of orientation usually neglect the important factors in intergroup relations; that is how the majority or out-group relates to the minority or in-group and the result of this interaction.

In analysing group formation and cohesion many social factors come into play and they should all be accounted for. As an example, we note that Jews have diverse racial, national, language characteristics and backgrounds. Their cohesion as a group is obvious although more than half of them do not adhere to the Jewish faith. (Rose and Rose, 1965:5). Both anti-semitism and perhaps the fact that all of them are conscious of the fact that their recent forebearers are known to have believed in the Jewish religion, and too, their perception of themselves as Jews are responsible for their cohesive nature.

West Indians are of diverse cultural, racial and national origin. Because of this one might assume that with such a background of differences they would be severely fragmented and lack cohesion wherever they are. Studies done by Glazer and Moynihan show that fragmentation occurs in groups where differences are obvious. (1970:35). West Indians, however, operate as a homogenous group here at McMaster

University. This study investigates this 'homogeneity' among West Indians here. In a word it seeks to answer the questions -- why and how do West Indians, coming from a background of such heterogenous character, form and operate as a cohesive group at McMaster University.

In my analysis I employ a two phase explanation which serves to illustrate how and why the split is made away from the majority group and how and why the separateness and cohesiveness is fostered and maintained. The former is attributed to what I refer to as "external" or "push" factors. These factors operate outside of the group and create a situation through which the in-group is "pushed" or becomes separated from the mainstream of the university society. The latter is due to "internal" or "pull" factors. These operate within the group and create a situation for togetherness or cohesiveness. To explain these "push" and "pull" factors I investigate the following areas:

- (1) The nature and function of the in-group.
- (2) The nature of intergroup relations.
- (3) What are the "external" and "internal" factors.
- (4) The effect of and necessity for both "external" and "internal" factors.

This study deals with perception and can be analysed using the symbolic interactionist perspective, that is, others reactions to us (perceived or real), our interpretation of those reactions, and our behavioural response to those interpretations. (Cooley, 1956; Mead, 1934; Rose, 1962). West Indian students perceive certain negative

stereotyping done by Canadians. Consequently they withdraw in response to the perceived stereotyping. Meaningful interaction with Canadians is limited. Along with this they perceive similarities among themselves. Their behavioural response is seeking the company of individuals of like kind.

#### ORGANIZATION OF PRESENTATION

Chapter I provides the background for the study. This is mainly a descriptive chapter which explains socio-historically the heterogenous character of West Indian society. Racial, cultural and national origin factors are explained as they operate in the West Indies and as transferred to Canada via students who come to attend McMaster University.

In Chapter II I present some theoretical and conceptual approaches to the study of group formation and cohesion so as to familiarize the reader with the various views on the subject which contribute towards an understanding of group dynamics.

Chapter III explains the participant observation methodology which I used in doing this study. Here I explain my choice of this type of methodology for this study. Included here too, is a description of the study centre where most of the observation was carried out and a statement about the area of investigation. How the interviews were conducted and the general overall feeling by participants is also explained.

Chapters IV and V include the information collected from both observations and interviews. Analysis here includes a description of the nature of intergroup relations between West Indians and Canadian students. West Indian perception of the way Canadians feel about them, West Indian perception of cultural differences between themselves and Canadians, and West Indian awareness and perception of their similarities and their desire to associate with like kind.

Chapter VI explains the necessity for the two phase analysis of West Indian group process, that is, "internal" or "pull" factors and "external" or "push" factors.

Finally I conclude by explaining some limitations of the study along with its significance.

CHAPTER I  
HETEROGENEITY AND HOMOGENEITY IN  
WEST INDIAN SOCIETY

West Indian society is very complex because of its heterogenous character. Each country in the West Indies is somewhat different from the other in several respects, and generalizations cannot be made of the whole area. Mintz (1971:19), for example, declares that "each society within the Caribbean area is of course in some important regard unique; no attempt to generalize about the entire area can deal adequately with the distinctive features of any single component society". Heterogeneity or differences in West Indian society is the result of (1) the very diverse origins of Caribbean population, (2) the complicated history of European cultural imposition in the area, (3) the absence in most of these societies of any firm continuity of culture of the colonial power (Mintz, Ibid). Geographic separateness, too, serves to foster inter-island differences.

In his attempt to understand the complexity of West Indian society, J.S. Furnivall employs a holistic functional theoretical framework in his analysis of this society and societal area. He suggests that this comprehensive theoretical framework could best account for most, if not all of the societal differences in the West Indies. West Indian society, he contends is a "plural society", comprising of a "medley of peoples".

It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the marketplace, buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere, there is a division of labour along racial lines... The plural society has a great variety of forms, but in some form or other it is the distinctive character of the modern tropical economy.... The society as a whole comprises separate racial sections; each section is an aggregate of the individuals rather than a corporate or organic whole.... In religion and the arts, in the graces and ornaments of social life there are no standards common to all sections of the community... The plural society is in fact held together only by pressure exerted from outside by the colonial power; it has no common will, (Furnivall, 1948:304-307).

In this chapter I shall examine the salient factors of heterogeneity which operate in West Indian society, namely, geography, racial and ethnic composition of the area and cultural differences including language, dress, religion, and the color-caste stratification system. An examination of these social elements would provide the reader with a good understanding of the cultural and racial heterogeneity that obtains in the English speaking West Indies.

#### FACTORS IN HETEROGENEITY

##### Geographic Differences

The English speaking West Indies (E.S.W.I.), formerly British West Indies, are situated between latitude  $10^{\circ}$  -  $25^{\circ}$  North of the Equator and between longitude  $60^{\circ}$  -  $80^{\circ}$ . They are arranged in a chain, parallel to the spine of Central America, stretching from the southern

tip of Florida to the northeast coast of Venezuela, South America. These islands divide the Atlantic Ocean from the Caribbean Sea. The countries which make up the E.S.W.I. are Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, two major groups of small islands -- the Leeward and the Windward Islands. For historical reasons Guyana, a country in South America and Honduras in Central America are also considered members of the E.S.W.I. Except for Guyana and Honduras these countries are insular and most of them small and densely populated. Climatically they are sub tropical and oceanic, warm in temperature, with few extremes ( $90^{\circ}$  -  $68^{\circ}$  all year round), and with considerable local variation in rainfall. Generally they have similar flora and fauna.

The most striking geographic feature which contributes to "differences" among West Indians is geographic incontinuity. The physical fact that the boundaries of each country are so obvious and unchangeable and apart creates a situation of separateness among West Indians. This separateness has caused them to develop what Lowenthal has labelled, a narrow national horizon. As he has written: "For West Indians, the island is, in most contexts, the most compelling area symbol. A man who say, "I am a Jamaican", or "I am a Barbadian", is very likely expressing the broadest allegiance he knows" (1960:787). So strong is this petty nationalistic allegiance that it significantly contributed to the break up of the West Indian Federation in 1958, after only a few years of existence (Lowenthal, 1961).

Separateness and strong national identity too, have resulted in rivalries among the countries and the creation of invidious stereotypic descriptions of the people of other islands. It is commonly said, for example, that Barbadians are cunning and that Trinidadians are tricky. Differences in national origin is strongly stressed by West Indians since being a West Indian is only secondary to being a Jamaican or Grenadian or Dominican.

#### Race And Ethnic Differences

Society in the E.S.W.I. is of a very mixed racial character. Born of colonialism and exploitation, it comprises today a heterogeneous population of several racial and ethnic origins -- Europeans, Indians, Chinese, Negroes, Carib and Arawak Indians. To understand the creation of this racially heterogeneous population one must be familiar with the history of the area.

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the West Indian islands were inhabited by brown-skinned people -- Caribs and Arawaks Indians. These people had come to the islands from the South American mainland to plant and hunt. They were not engaged in commerce and did not value gold or other precious metals (Parry and Havelock, 1957). The arrival of Columbus and his crew in 1492 on their first voyage in their quest for gold for the Spanish monarchy was the beginning of an era of slavery in the West Indies since the Arawaks and Caribs were persecuted, killed or enslaved. It also marked the introduction of new racial elements into the islands. In order to "settle" the islands



Columbus requested more Spaniards from Spain to tend the livestock and agricultural crops which were introduced. He also requested a number of priests to convert the Caribs and Arawaks to Christianity. In this way a significant number of people of European descent came to settle in the West Indies,

Black slaves were also introduced into the West Indies during this period of Spanish settlement. A Spanish priest, Bartolomé de las Casas, fearing the annihilation of the native population under slavery requested of the Spanish king, Charles V permission to import African slaves to the West Indies, twelve to each settler. Charles V authorized the importation of 4,000 slaves to the area; hence the addition of Blacks to the West Indian population. (Williams, 1971:52).

For over a quarter century the West Indian population stabilized somewhat in racial composition and size. It consisted of Spaniards, few Blacks, and fewer Caribs and Arawaks. However between 1527-1650 the number of both White and Black people was to increase significantly. During this time English explorers arrived in the West Indies and successfully settled several islands, St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat. In 1635 Cardinal Richelieu organized the "Campagnie des Isles d'Amerique" and the French proceeded to settle the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Dutchmen also came and settled several smaller islands. (Parry and Havelock, 1957). What ensued after the initial migration and settlement of these many new Europeans to the area was conflicts between the inhabitants of the islands and

among the home governments. Considerable struggles resulted and islands changed hands, some as many as thirteen times. These islands changed from being controlled by one European power to another or others in succession.

Colonial rule in the West Indies produced large agricultural developments and massive plantation economies. The development of these huge plantation economies necessitated larger amounts of labour and manpower than was available in the islands. Consequently thousands of Black slaves were imported from Africa to work the fields. The large number of Blacks imported into the islands significantly changed the racial character of the population. It was a change which was to be permanent since today there is significantly more Blacks than any other racial group in the West Indies.

Slavery and the importation of Blacks from Africa continued in the West Indies until 1834 when it was outlawed by the British Parliament. After slavery ended Britain, determined to continue the plantation system and recognizing the diminished supply of manpower since ex-slaves preferred to work their own land, turned to Europe for labour. In 1834 and 1839 some labour came from Portugal. In 1839 some came from France, while in 1840 some more came from Europe. This supply was, however, far from adequate. Britain then sought more manpower from India, one of her largest colonial possessions. East Indian workers were brought to the West Indies as indentured labourers. Between 1833 and 1917, Trinidad imported 145,000 East

Indians, and British Guiana, 238,000; 21,500 were introduced into Jamaica; 1,500 into St. Lucia; 1,820 in St. Vincent; 2,750 into Grenada (Williams, 1964:100). As a result of this immigration another new racial element numbering some 500,000 was introduced into the area. Simultaneously small numbers of Chinese coolies were introduced into the West Indies as indentured servants. Although the number of Chinese was small, their immigration meant the introduction of yet another racial group in the Caribbean (Williams, 1964).

To complete the heterogenous mix, local creoles were added to the population. Miscegenation was very prevalent in West Indian society since White slave masters usually kept slave concubines. Their offspring, the West Indian "creole" or hybrid added another racial group to the existing cosmopolitan population.

West Indian population then, as the historical analysis shows is racially very heterogenous. It is comprised of the descendents of Caribs and Arawaks who inhabited the area before the arrival of Europeans, White descendents of the European colonizers, planters and slave holders, Black descendents of the slave population, descendents of East Indian and Chinese indentured servants and the local creoles who were the result of inter-racial breeding. The introduction of these different peoples also meant the beginning of cultural heterogeneity which still obtains today in the islands. The cultural content of the various groups have left their imprint on West Indian society, thus making it culturally very varied as we will discuss later in this chapter.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultural pluralism is one of the distinctive features of the plural society (Smith, 1965:235). Cultural heterogeneity is prevalent in West Indian society because of (1) the color-caste stratification system which obtains there, (2) the ethno-cultural differences and (3) the length and effect of the various colonial exploitations in the area. These three factors create a situation where different categories of people in the population exhibit diverse cultural norms.

### Culture And Color-Caste Stratification

One of the long lasting effects of slavery in the West Indies is the peculiar color-caste stratification that exists there today and which is manifested in cultural differences in the population. Under the slave regime most slaves were black and most Blacks were slaves. All whites were free. The racial hybrids who were introduced into the population through miscegenation were of a brown complexion. Being born of one white parent these "creoles", as they came to be called, were not treated as slaves. In fact they were allowed to own black slaves themselves, to educate themselves and cultivate the arts, and by marrying white people where possible, attempt to produce offspring of sufficient lightness of skin to assume the full rights and status as the white Europeans.

It was in this way that a scale of values according to skin color was created, with white and black skin representing the poles of virtue and worthlessness.

Economically, whites were the "haves" since they made the laws, owned all the property and the slaves. Blacks were the "have-nots", Brown people were in the middle. They owned only as much as the white Europeans would let them. Stratificationwise then, white people were at the top of the hierarchical ladder, brown people were somewhere in the middle, and black people were at the base. Color and class then were inter-changeable. Madeleine Kerr, in her analysis of Jamaican society observed that "class and colour interweave to such an extent that a problem which has its origin in class structure may appear to be a conflict over colour." (1963:93).

Difference in color and class coincided with cultural differences. "White" culture was of European derivation. It was manifested in the playing of European games, for example, cricket; the wearing of European dress; the use of European languages, and European diet. Religion too for this sector of the population was either the Church of England or the Roman Catholic church. To complete the process of Europeanization education was European oriented. The child in the West Indies learned more about Europe than they learned about the countries surrounding them. (Williams, 1969:22-24). "Black" culture was of African derivation. African cultural elements were manifested

in diet, language, folklore, religion, music and banking through the "Susu".\* These cultural elements were kept alive and preserved through the tales, discussions and religious and magical rites of the old slaves. (Simpson, 1971:491). Creole culture included elements of both European and African cultural derivation. However since the Europeans considered anything African to be inferior, and the creoles were striving for social mobility, gradually they adhered more and more to the European culture. Color then became symbol of class and culture. Different behavioural norms were practiced by people of varying shades and varying classes. This kind of situation persists even today in West Indian society.

#### Culture And Race

Simultaneous with cultural differences according to color is differences according to race. M.G. Smith commenting on West Indian culture declared that, "its cultural composition mirrors its racial mixture". (1961:115). The cultural norms of Whites and Blacks and creoles have been explained previously in this chapter since they fit simultaneously into the color and racial categories. The Indians and Chinese are somewhat separate as they do not fit strictly into the color categorization.

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\*Williams explains the 'Susu' in this way: "For those whom even the limited opportunities of accumulating capital were impossible, the 'susu' afforded a means of putting aside sums for a brief period. Of West African origin, the 'susu' was a sort of informal bank, organized by a number of people, to which each contributed a fixed sum weekly, the total being drawn by each member in turn. It was particularly popular at those seasons when larger sums of money than usual were needed -- Christmas, carnival, Easter, first communion of a child and so on." (1969:17).

Morton Klass (1961), describes East Indians as people who have, in the face of considerable difficulty re-established an Indian village lifestyle in their respective new homelands in the West Indies. Indians formed very cohesive groups in the West Indies. Their cultural individualism is manifested in their dress especially among middle age and older women who wear saris, a traditional East Indian dress. Indians worshipped in Hindu Temples and Moslem mosques and retained their Indian religion. The diet of the Indians was similar to that of those in their homeland. Most of them also spoke Hindi. So distinct and separate were some of the Indian communities that in some islands, for example Trinidad and Guyana they formed separate political parties and social organizations. (Horowitz, 1971).

Within the Indian group itself cultural sub-divisions existed. For example, Anthony Maingot, (1971:59), revealed that Indians further divided themselves culturally along caste or religious lines since in their homeland each caste and each religion had a distinctive way of life.

Chinese in the West Indies were relatively few in number. Chinese found their niches as rumshop and general store owners or laundrymen. Being few in number they did not maintain much of their cultural heritage for very long. They quickly changed to the European style of dress, and practiced Roman Catholicism or Church of England as their religion. They did, however, maintain their language and diet. (Horowitz, 1971).

### Colonial Exploitation

Cultural heterogeneity in the West Indies was also a direct result of the varied and diverse colonial exploitation situations. Mintz has observed that the population of these countries, (West Indies) were almost completely introduced there by Europeans after which the islands were "fitted to European needs with peculiar intensity and pervasiveness" (1971:33). He also states that "the cultural patterns of the controlling powers, though conveyed through a grossly uniform colonial design, have differentially affected the nature of local society in these various lands -- Dutch, English, French, North American and other imperial societies by no means have had the same impact on their respective colonies" (Mintz, Ibid). The different and successive colonial influences have had an impact in several cultural areas as explained previously. The most significant impact however, with regard to heterogeneity has been in language.

In the E.S.W.I. although English is the first language in all the islands, it is spoken in a variety of ways ranging from standard English to dialects which are hardly recognizable by English speaking outsiders. Every island has its own creole language. In most cases the dialects are fusion of the African speech and the language of the White Europeans (Taylor, 1971:75-91). Thus in the islands formerly controlled by the French -- Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent, the French language forms the basis for the creole. In Trinidad and Jamaica, Spanish and French have blended to form the basis of the creole there. Elsewhere, for example, Barbados which



was always British, English is the basis of the creole. "Creole" languages therefore often included some Spanish or French or archaic English words, phrases and expressions. The mixture of languages is so unique, pronounced and varied that in many instances it is difficult to understand completely the colloquial expressions of other E.S.W.I. islands without explanation.

#### SOME ASPECTS OF HOMOGENEITY

This chapter would be incomplete if some salient aspects of homogeneity were not included here, if only to give a complete picture of the West Indian socio-historical situation.

Philip Sherlock states that, "there is no country called the West Indies, but there are three and half million West Indians" whose West Indian "nationalism" refers to a "characteristic way of life that has grown out of identifiable historical events" (Sherlock, 1966:7). Historical similarity is indeed the most obvious fact of homogeneity in the West Indian situation. West Indians share the common experience of colonialism and the slave plantation system. Horowitz agrees that Caribbean commonality is expressed mainly in terms of history in several ways, namely; "...the swift extirpation of native populations, the early definition of the islands as a sphere of European overseas agricultural capitalism, based primarily on sugarcane, African slaves and the plantation system,..., the successive introduction of massive new "foreign" populations into the lower sectors of insular social structures, under conditions of extremely restricted opportunities

for upward economic, social or political mobility, the prevailing absence of any ideology of national identity that could serve as a goal for mass acculturation, the persistence of colonialism, and of the colonial ambiance, longer than in any other area outside Western Europe..." (Horowitz, 1971:20). These features of historical similarity among the West Indian islands have been to a significant extent the exact reasons for the differences in the society. Historically, as Horowitz has outlined, all the components of this society have had an affiliation with Europe. The effects of this affiliation is manifested in multifarious ways, which indeed are the factors in heterogeneity in West Indian society. History then is the key to West Indian similarities as well as their differences.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained how heterogeneity is manifested in West Indian society through a socio-historical analysis of the social elements which contribute to pluralism -- race, culture, and national differences.

In discussing heterogeneity it is not my intention to convey the impression that strict ethnic, cultural or national separatism exists in the West Indies and that assimilation is non-existent. To be sure, in many instances, cultural, structural and marital assimilation has occurred. However this assimilation has not meant the submergence or complete fusion of all or any of the various differences described here. Heterogeneity in West Indian society is still a very

viable, potent factor (Furnivall, 1948).

It is from this background of heterogeneity that students who comprise the sample for this study originate. These students are of different races, different national origin and from backgrounds of a variety of cultural norms. Using this heterogeneity as a background factor then, this study seeks to explain West Indian group formation and cohesion at McMaster University.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO GROUP FORMATION AND COHESION

An examination of sociological literature on group process<sup>1</sup> reveals that, in the main, sociologists have researched and analysed the obvious factors which influenced the formation of groups, for example, ethnicity, (Gans, 1962; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970), religion, (Shaffir, 1974), social and economic status, (Harrington, 1962; Galbraith, 1958; Rainwater, 1960), etc. Gordon W. Allport declares that there are literally thousands of studies dealing with these group differences.<sup>2</sup> Most studies deal specifically with the manifestation and operation of some social phenomenon in an already identified sub group, rather than with the dynamic process of group formation and cohesion or the overall theoretical frameworks to study this process. Since these individual social factors are indeed potent

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<sup>1</sup>This refers to the series of events or happenings which occur in the formation of a group. There recur often enough so that one might observe a pattern.

<sup>2</sup>Among the sources that give reviews of research dealing with group differences are the following:  
L.E. Tyler, The Psychology of Human Differences, D. Appleton -- Century N.Y. 1947;  
A. Anastasi and J.P. Foley, Differential Psychology; MacMillan & Co., N.Y. 1949;  
O. Klineberg, Race Differences, Harper, N.Y. 1935.

factors in bringing groups together, they are obviously important and cannot be overlooked. However the formation and cohesion of sub groups in the community should be explained or accounted for by some viable social theory. In other words there should be some common basis for the formation and persistence of all sub groups regardless of their individual social characteristics. Several theoretical approaches have been proposed and each has made a contribution to our understanding of group behaviour. It is not my purpose here to exhaustively review theories of group process. Instead, selected theories will be described briefly to give the reader some familiarity with differing viewpoints on group process. Following are highlights of the prevalent theoretical approaches utilized by some social scientists for accounting for the dynamic process of group formation and cohesion.

#### ECOLOGICAL THEORY

Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, writing more than a generation ago espoused an ecological theory as being the basis for group formation and continuity. These sociologists argue that "community of stock", that is, social factors such as ethnicity, religion or language is not always enough to ensure unity of coherence for a long time. Local unity is a necessity, they postulate (Park and Burgess, 1970:141). As an example they state that, "The social unity of Jews has been weakened to a marked degree since their dispersion, in spite of their physiological and confessional unity.

It has become more compact in cases where a group of Jews have lived for some time in the same territory, and the efforts of modern "Zionism" to restore Jewish unity on a larger scale calculate upon concentration in one locality".

Park and Burgess agree that interaction, solidarity and shared interest of group members are integral necessities in group process. However they regard these constitutive elements only as a function of common residence. They contend that:

the first and most obvious elements of the continuity of group unity is the continuance of the locality, of the place and soil on which the group lives. The State still more the city, and also countless other associations, owe their unity first of all to the territory which constitutes the abiding substratum for all change of their contents. To be sure the continuance of the locality does not itself alone mean the continuance of social unity, since for instance, if the whole population of a state is driven out by a conquering group, we speak of a changed civic group in spite of the continuance of the territory. Moreover the unity of whose character we are speaking is psychical, and it is this psychical factor itself which makes the territorial substratum a unity. (1970:140).

This ecological orientation infers that once an area is defined for interaction, potential group members would interact there or identify it as a place for interaction. Moreover an identifiable place provides continuity for the group. Added to this is the fact that the physical environment can have some psychological significance for the individual or potential group members. (Shaw, 1971:118).

Therefore with an identifiable locale and an environment that is psychologically satisfactory, group formation and cohesion is fostered. While this ecological theory, however, may be adequate in accounting for groups which operate in an identifiable location, it is very restrictive as it cannot be extended to cover all types of groups.

### INTERACTION THEORY

Interaction theory of group process is postulated by both Elizabeth Botts and George C. Homans. Elizabeth Botts conceptualizes the group or community not as the local area in which people live but rather as the network of actual social relationships they maintain, regardless of whether these are confined to the local area or run beyond its boundaries. (1971:99). Accordingly then, Botts theorizes that group continuance is based primarily on interaction which comes about because of reciprocal dependence between group members, that is, friends, relatives, and acquaintances who constitute accessible contact points. (1971:99).

George C. Homans also uses the interactional approach to explain group process. He asserts that sentiment, activity and interaction are the three behaviour characteristics which must be considered if one is to understand group process. He explains how these characteristics are manifested and their effects on group process in this way. He postulates that, (1) the more frequently people interact with one another, the stronger their sentiments of friendship for one another are apt to be. (2) People who feel

sentiments of liking for one another will express those sentiments in activities over and above the activities of the external system. (3) Persons who interact with one another frequently are more like one another in their activities than they are like other persons with whom they interact less frequently. (4) The activities of a sub group may become increasingly differentiated from those of other sub groups up to some limit imposed by the controls of the larger group to which all the sub groups belong. (1950:133-136). In a nutshell then, Homans believes that interdependence of area residents causes interaction among them. Frequency of interaction correlates positively with the degree of sentiment among members of the group and also with the sentiment for the group as a whole.

Bonner (1959) and Stogdill (1959) also agree that interaction which they view as one form of interdependence is the essence of "groupness". Their definition of the group is based upon this aspect: A group is a number of people in interaction with one another, and it is this interaction process that distinguishes the group from an aggregate. (Bonner, 1959:4). A group may be regarded as an open interaction system in which actions determine the structure of the system and successive interactions exert coequal effects upon the identity of the system. (Stogdill, 1959:18).

The central concept in these definitions for the operation of the group is interaction or interdependence among group members. While these are indeed important factors in group formation, they operate only within the group itself. Consequently internal interaction



only, as the basis of group formation is a limited process since it neglects intergroup relations, that is, "whenever individuals belonging to one in-group, collectively or individually interact with another group or its members in terms of their group identification" (Sherif and Sherif, 1953:2).

#### IN-GROUP/OUT-GROUP THEORY

"It is not always the dominant majority that forces minority groups to remain separate. They often prefer to keep their identity. ... Human groups tend to stay apart. We need not subscribe this tendency to a gregarious instinct, to a "consciousness of kind" or to prejudice. The fact is adequately explained by the principles of ease, less effort, congeniality and pride in ones own culture". (Allport, 1958:18). G.W. Allport contends that the formation of in-groups is basically a voluntary process since it is more convenient for people who are familiar with each other to interact with each other. Added to this Sherif and Sherif (1953) have agreed that this familiarity can come about as a result of shared attitudes, aspirations and goals. Familiarity, Allport contends, is the indispensable basis of our existence. Once these in-groups are formed the groundwork is laid for all kinds of psychological elaborations which serve to perpetuate the in-group/out-group split. This happens because people who stay separate have few channels of communication. They easily exaggerate the degree of difference between the groups, and readily misunderstand the grounds for it. Along with this, the separateness may lead to genuine conflicts of interest as well as to many imaginary

ones. (Allport, 1958:19). Moreover too, he suggests that human beings form group norms to suit their own adaptive needs and in so doing they may consciously or unconsciously develop prejudices towards both other groups and the larger society.

In-group loyalty does not necessarily imply hostility towards the out-group since several different groups can recognize each other and co-exist. However in many instances, Allport contends, the perpetuation and cohesion of the in-group is fostered by reciprocal hostility between the two groups. This hostility is manifested in different gradations of rejection between the groups, namely, anti-locution or verbal rejection, discrimination including segregation or physical attack of all degrees and intensity. (Allport, 1958:48). This further enhances the split and induces internal cohesiveness within the group.

#### SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY AND "CONSCIOUSNESS OF KIND"

Charles H. Cooley (1956) and George H. Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionist approach to human behaviour incorporates a perception/reaction theory of group formation. Cooley's concept of the "Looking-glass self" explains that to achieve the feelings and idea of a conscious self we must see ourselves through the eyes of others. This helps to determine our self image which is ascertained through our interpretation of the various symbols used with reference to us in our various social situations.

As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thoughts of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it. (1956:183).

The cognitive aspect of this self image or self concept influences our behaviour which in turn is greatly influenced by the social milieus within which we operate. In a word, self conception is derived from our perception of how others view us, not the actual view of others.

A self idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements; the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. (1956:184).

The congruence between our perceptions and the actual response of others affects interaction, according to Cooley and Mead. If congruence is low interaction may be impaired and participation in the group may be difficult and frustrating. This frustration may lead to ostracism or withdrawal of the self.

This symbolic interaction perspective is incorporated in Shibutani and Kwan's (1965) ideas regarding "consciousness of kind". Once our self image and behavioural responses are ascertained, we begin to identify and associate with others whom we perceive to be similar and who behave in a manner similar to ourselves and to view "others" as different.

According to T. Shibutani and K.M. Kwan (1965) these perceived similarities and differences among people is the basis of group formation and cohesion. They affirm that, "human beings interact not so much in terms of what they actually are but in terms of the conception that they form of themselves and of one another. (1965:38). Hence people who perceive themselves as being similar, that is, sharing some kind of commonality, usually develop a "consciousness of kind". This "consciousness of kind" is defined as a phenomenon involving some sort of sympathetic identification with others in the same category. (1965:38). While on the one hand this identification by way of perceived similarities creates unity, internal cohesiveness and leads to an enhancement of group solidarity, on the other it accentuates the differences between the in-group and the outsiders because of perceived differences, since those who share "consciousness of kind" are convinced that the others, the out-group are basically different from themselves and should be treated differently. (1965:43).

This situation of "selective perception" (regardless of whether the conception of the other is accurate or not) causes high social distance\* between the in-group and the out-group and consequently deters spontaneous interaction among them. Within the in-group or among those who share "consciousness of kind" however, low social

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\* Social distance is defined by Shibutani and Kwan as "the psychological barriers that facilitates or deter easy and spontaneous interaction", (1965:44).

distance facilitates spontaneous interaction among the group members. Moreover too, for this in-group the other people with whom the individual identifies becomes his most important reference group. (1965:44). Group formation is thus enhanced.

### RECAPITULATION

In analysing the theories and conceptual approaches which attempt to explain the social phenomenon of group formation and cohesion, one finds that for each approach a definite social factor is dominant in the interpretation of the social process. The ecological school assert that ecological conditions, for example, geography, shared locality, spatial considerations, etc., are the main factors in group process. The social interactionists believe that the main force behind group formation and cohesion is interaction which incorporates activity and sentiment. Proponents of the in-group/out-group theory contend that group formation, unity and cohesiveness are directly related to choice, that is, the preference of being with one's own kind over the "stranger", because of familiarity with one's own kind of people and their way of life. Lastly proponents of the symbolic interactionist perspective and the "consciousness of kind" conceptualization base their approach on similarity and difference perceptions among people.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In presenting this research study on West Indian group formation and cohesion at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario it is important to provide an account of the methodology used in the study. This provides an explanation of the manner in which the data was gathered as well as it explains the usefulness of the particular research method used. In an attempt to give as comprehensive an exposition as possible as to how the research was carried out, I shall discuss here (1) the reasons for the selection of the particular research technique, (2) field work experiences which would give some insight into my interviewing and observation techniques as well as the problems encountered in the field, and the reactions of the students to the study. Finally, (3) the process of the analysis of the data will be considered.

#### DECIDING ON THE RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

Participant Observation as a sociological method of inquiry has certain definite merits. This technique provides the greatest advantage for amassing reliable, relevant and wide range data (Kluckhohn, 1940). This research method affords access to data which come from observation in current social situations. It obtains information through observation that cannot be got through direct or

indirect questioning. It provides ready access to gossip. It shows whether a situation is commonplace or unusual. It allows for continued and direct contact with the subjects studied, thus enabling the researcher to obtain quality information. It permits the researcher to check and recheck data collected through direct observation and continued participation. (Becker & Geer, 1970; Kluckhohn, 1940). Kluckhohn's statement on participant observation defines the method and speaks of its merits:

Participant observation is the conscious and systematic sharing, insofar as circumstances permit, in the life-activities, and, on occasion, in the interests and affects of a group of persons. Its purpose is to obtain data about behaviour through direct contact, and in terms of specific situations in which the distortion that results from the investigator's being an outsider is minimized. (1940:331-343).

When I decided that I would study West Indian students on campus, I consulted with a colleague, a West Indian who had been studying at McMaster for four and a half years to find out as much as possible about the West Indian students here. I enquired about the number of students on campus, the kinds of programs they were enrolled in, drop out rate among West Indian students, etc. In short I was trying to solicit from him any ideas that might provide the basis for an interesting research project. My colleague informed me that studying West Indian students would not be a problem because firstly, the number of students was not large and secondly, they were easily accessible since they always seemed to congregate and occupy

some conspicuous area or building or room on campus. He said:

During my first two years here, West Indian students used to congregate in the "Commons". Then they moved to Wentworth House. You would see them standing around and talking inside of Wentworth House. Then in the summer they would sit around on the benches on the outside. I think it was because "The Bread Bin" was in this building, so when people came to shop they would meet. Another thing is that it is convenient to wait in here for the bus, especially during the winter. Also the "John" is over here. After that people moved to the back tables of Arts II cafeteria. Now they are back in Wentworth House in the International Lounge.

It was on this cue from my friend that I decided to spend time with and observe and analyse the West Indian student social situation where they gathered, in as much as a meeting place for them was identifiable.

At this point in time I had not formulated any hypotheses nor did I have any notion of what aspect of the students' lives I wanted to study. Consequently I determined to proceed into the field only with the vague idea of gathering data on West Indian students' social life in Canada and at McMaster. As my research method I contemplated participant observation because I felt that it would provide the most flexibility in deciding the exact subject for research.

With the above scheme in mind I felt that I could uncover both the dynamic processes of interaction and the internal structure of the West Indian group. I planned to spend time observing and participating in the social life of the students on campus and also interviewing as many of them as possible, especially key people in the group, such as the executive of the Afro-Caribbean Association, the



coach of the soccer team, the organizers of the West Indian cultural events, etc. In addition to observing and interviewing at the lounge I planned to attend meetings and social functions of the Afro-Caribbean Association, an organization which many West Indian students belong to. With this research design I felt assured that I would get an accurate insight into West Indian students' social life while simultaneously sharing the life of the "community". (Young, 1966:166; Becker and Geer, 1970).

During the summer prior to the actual beginning of the study I visited Wentworth House several times to get acquainted with the area. On all my visits there, West Indian students were sitting and waiting around or playing cards or dominoes in the lobby or waiting area or inside of the International Students' Lounge. The number of students was small, maybe, at most nine or ten at any one time. Nevertheless it was obvious to me from my limited observation then that Wentworth House was a meeting place for West Indian students. To ascertain that there were no other meeting places at the time I visited and revisited the previous meeting places that had been suggested by my friend. I also enquired of the students about other locations. From their responses and from my visits to the other locations on campus it was evident that West Indian student activity elsewhere was not obvious. It was evident too that Wentworth House, especially the International Students' Lounge was the meeting place for West Indian students at McMaster University.

Since Wentworth House and more specifically the International Students' Lounge was the location of my study centre, a complete understanding of how the research was done necessarily must include a description of the physical setting. This description is needed in research of this kind because as Kurt Lewin states, "observation or social behaviour is usually of little value if it does not include an adequate description of the character of the social atmosphere or the larger unit of activity within which the specific social act occurs," (Lewin, 1951).

Wentworth House geographically is in a very strategic location on the McMaster campus. It is situated at the main entrance of the university and between two well used bus areas. Wentworth House houses two pubs: "The Downstairs John" which is used primarily by undergraduate students, and on a split upper level is the "Phoenix", a graduate student pub. Also on the upper split level is a meeting room and a graduate student lounge which is set up with sofas and tables for relaxation. On the lower split level there is located two small offices; an office or drop in centre for South East Asia students and the office of the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, a student directed and controlled environmental project.

The International Students' Lounge itself is situated on the left, across from these two offices. The lounge can be described as a large living room of contemporary design. The room is well lit, airconditioned in the summer, has large windows but a musty smell. Bright colors, that is, orange, yellow and green dominate. Brightly

colored drapes hang around the walls which is further decorated with one picture of an Indian woman and several old posters which describe past events of international student interest, for example, "Guyanese Students' Association Xmas Function, 1974", "African and West Indian Night, 1974", "I.S.A. trip to Ottawa, 1974", etc. Around the perimeter of the room several sofas and coffee tables are set up in small clusters.

As you enter the lounge, on the left there is a small adjoining room separated from the main lounge by glass doors. The room contains one desk, a "public" typewriter, a telephone with a direct line to Toronto, telephone books, filing cabinets and small odds and ends. Immediately in front of the glass door leading to the adjoining room is a large wooden desk. On the right there is stereo equipment, a magazine rack with magazines from different countries, for example, 'Australian News', 'Pacific Island Monthly', 'Taiwan Newsletter', 'Barbados Newsletter', 'Jamaica' and several other magazines and periodicals written in foreign languages.

In the lounge too, there is a table set up with a huge coffee urn, usually with perking coffee, cups milk and sugar. Significant too in this physical setting is the pigeon holed mail boxes, alphabetically arranged and hanging from the wall.

#### FIELD EXPERIENCES

As I review my field notes only one area appeared problematic. The initial situation of getting off the ground was my greatest concern.

My amateurism in the area of participant observation made me anticipate problems in starting which never really materialized. Blanche Geer, (1967), suggests reasons for this kind of occurrence and she also states the usual outcome which I found to be true in my particular case:

...Theory, other studies, and common sense makes one anticipate difficulties which do not materialize. People one expects to be hostile are not; situations one expects to be incoherent reveal themselves as relatively easily grasped when one is in the midst of them; apparently difficult problems of finding subjects or grouping them into manageable categories are easier in the doing than in theoretical discussions....We underestimate people's trust in our neutrality, their lack of interest, perhaps, if we seem to be doing no harm. And we project theoretical problems into the field. Because the process of group formation is difficult to conceptualize, we suppose it will be difficult to observe. We expect ephemeral unstructured situations like the previews to appear incoherent. Perhaps such mistakes are a necessary part of our efforts to design the study in advance. (1967:381-383).

Besides minor problems with scheduling of interviews and of trying to be present at all relevant social functions, no other significant problems occurred during my period of field work....

I began data collection at the International Students' Lounge in early September when the school year began. My first days in the field and my initial field experiences did not go as I anticipated. Being West Indian myself, and also being a student I imagined that getting into the field and establishing rapport with the students would be almost automatic. This was not the case. Getting into the

field was not at all problematic since I did not need any special permission to sit in the lounge. However establishing myself as a participant in the group was somewhat slow. I believe that this delay was because of my initial apprehension and too, because of the fact that very few students knew what I was doing there. My field notes at this time reveal this apprehension. One recording at this time reads this way: "I made several attempts to move towards either conversation and participate but for a long time I remained an observer and silent distant listener". In the long run though, being West Indian and a student was advantageous as it helped to reduce the amount of time and energy that might have been necessary to develop acceptance in the group. (Trice, 1970:79-82). In a word my situation in gaining acceptance among the West Indian students was more compatible with Gans' circumstance in Levittown (Gans, 1967) than with Whyte's in Cornerville. (Whyte, 1966). Part of gaining acceptance meant explaining in as simple and unscientific terms as possible to the West Indian students what my study was all about. My explanation to them was simply, "I am doing a research project about West Indians and I hang out here with them. I'm collecting data, so I am interested in talking to people when they come in here since this is a sort of West Indian hang out. In a nut shell, I'm trying to find out the kinds of problems they have when they come to Canada". This explanation seemed to suffice.

As Trice suggests, being an "insider" for purposes of data collection has its disadvantages since it could bring about a situation of "too much rapport" with the subjects. This could result in lack of objectivity on the part of the investigator because of his closeness with the subjects. (1970:78-79). Consequently I had to be very careful as to what kind of niche I was carving out for myself. Being an "insider", according to Trice would mean more intense acceptance and a greater opportunity to define hypothesis in a sharp manner, (1970:81) but as Miller points out this acceptance can develop to a point where it hinders the study. He explains that such a close relationship had developed between himself and the union leaders who he studied that, "some penetrating lines of inquiry had to be dropped. To continue close rapport and to pursue avenues of investigation which appeared antagonistic to the union leaders was impossible." (1970:80). In this light then, I determined to assume a neutral role. Therefore, while being a student and a West Indian helped to facilitate and increase acceptance as well as stimulate rapport, my neutral role allowed me to maintain rapport at a level that was not detrimental to the study. Along with this my neutral role helped in allowing me to be objective. Trice agrees that such a role "can be the most effective vehicle for securing this objectivity". (1970:81).

My major research activities as a participant-observer included several research areas. For five months, September to January I visited Wentworth House and sat in the International Students' Lounge

observing events that occurred there and the students who used the facility. I spoke to students informally and joined in discussions with groups of them. When it was convenient I would occasionally join in a card game. Being on the scene afforded me the opportunity to get first hand knowledge of events as well as it allowed me to learn the story behind any events by questioning participants about what was happening and why. Along with this it allowed me to fill out the story by asking the students present their relation to the event, their reactions, opinions and evaluations of its significance.

As part of the social process I applied for and got associate membership in the Afro-Caribbean Association (ACA). As a result I attended and participated in ACA meetings, rap sessions, speakers' meetings, sports events, parties and any other social function that was given. My membership in ACA also allowed me the opportunity to identify and subsequently interview such people as the president, secretary, treasurer and cultural program coordinator. Interviewing these people was very useful because I was able to get from them information about the organization that might not be known by non-executive members.

I also arranged and conducted interviews with students who agreed to be interviewed at length. In all I interviewed twenty-two students; some more than once during this period. Included in this sample were ten males and twelve females. Six students were in their first year, one in the second year, seven in the third year, six in their fourth year and two were graduates. This sample included

students of different racial backgrounds -- Blacks, Whites, Chinese, and Indians. They were also of different national origin -- from Trinidad, Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua and Bahamas.

Some of the interviews were done in the lounge itself, others were done at the students' homes or at some other location on campus. The location that was decided on was solely at the convenience of the student. As interviewer my main objective was to get the student to tell his or her story or supply an expert opinion of the group since they were the only ones who had the expertise to do so. (Trice, 1970:79).

The data collected from these interviews were varied and interesting, covering a number of areas such as, climate, academics, problems of adjustment in Canada, ways of spending spare time, etc. On primary analysis no overwhelming general pattern emerged from these interviews based on the students' differences. This, I believe, was due in part to the size of the sample as well as the general thrust and direction of the interviews. Generally the thrust was in the area of West Indian interaction with Canadians and West Indian adjustment to the Canadian lifestyle.

These various activities which I indulged in cast me into three types of research roles, namely, total researcher, researcher-participant, and total participant. (Gans, 1967). And as Geer explained in her accounts, I was at once reporter, interviewer and scientist. (1967:383).



## THE INTERVIEW

Some of the scheduled interviews were tape-recorded, some were not. While the method of tape recording data is advantageous in that it allows the interviewer to get verbatim responses, it could also be an impediment in the collecting of reliable data if respondents are uncomfortable with the machine. Being cognizant of this fact I gave the students the option of having the interview taped or not taped. It did not matter to most of them whether it was or it was not. On analysis I found that the quality of the data collected both with and without the taperecorder compared quite well. I had built up such great rapport with the students that they felt very comfortable with me. Moreover too, the fact that I was West Indian and a student made it easier for me to gain their trust. Consequently they were open and frank and somehow expected me to sympathize with them, sharing their frustrations and disappointments and indignation. The students saw me as one of them. Consequently their responses would include comments like, "as you know", or "Well I am sure you know..." or "You know what I mean", or they might ask a question such as "This has not happened to you?" Identification with the interviewer was very strong, therefore the taperecorder was not inhibiting.

For the interviews I had no preformulated questionnaire. In using this unstructured method of interviewing, rather than drawing up a rigid set of questions I had greater flexibility and was less restricted in the subject matter for questions. The merits of this

technique of unstructured interviews as part of the participant observation process is spelled out by Becker and Geer:

In this kind of interview, the interviewer explores many facets of his interviewee's concerns, treating subjects as they come up in conversation, pursuing interesting leads, allowing his imagination and ingenuity full rein as he tries to develop new hypotheses and test them in the course of the interview. (1970:133).

Interviews were therefore, for the most part, spontaneous.

In order to get the interview "off the ground" I started off by asking general questions concerning the students' social adjustment in Canada and at McMaster, recognizing that they had migrated here from the West Indies and that migration or change in environment, whether temporary or not is always a form of stress. (Park and Burgess, 1970). After this the direction in which the interview went depended to a large extent on the person being interviewed and too, on the responses of the student. For example, when I interviewed the President of the Afro-Caribbean Association the bulk of my conversation focussed on the Association and its activities. Or when I interviewed the coach of the West Indian soccer team, I focussed on sports and student participation in this area. As a result, the interviews were not exactly alike because of the different foci. The range of topics included discussions of academics, Canadian and West Indian social interaction, West Indian community solidarity, etc.

As I went along too, I analysed my notes and from the emerging themes I got new ideas and insights and I would be sure to get answers to certain questions which I thought then to be important and relevant.

In a word then, the whole process of interviewing and data collection was a dynamic one designed to collect as much quality data as possible.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The process of data analysis did not begin at the end of the data collection process in the field. Throughout the entire course of the recording of field notes, I read and re-read the data, looking for trends or themes. (Glazer and Strauss, 1970:288-292). On occasion I would come up with a rough definition of some social phenomenon which I thought I might try to explain. For example, at the beginning of the study the theme of discrimination was so strong that I began contemplating several hypotheses that could theoretically explain discrimination among West Indian students. However, as the interviews continued other themes began to emerge. Analysis then became a question of constantly reformulating hypotheses based on the emerging themes. Some of these themes were, (a) Identification, (b) Stereotyping, (c) Problems of Adjustment of West Indian students, (d) Factors affecting Community Group Behaviour, and (e) Problems in Academics as they relate to West Indian students.

Once all the data was collected, they were of quite a heterogenous character. At this time I began intense analysis, trying to obtain both a good understanding of West Indian social life at McMaster, while scanning the interviews for themes. As a result of this process a multiplicity of themes began to emerge. The most obvious ones, and the ones which subsequently formed the basis for

this thesis were,

- (1) West Indian Perception of The Way Canadians Feel about Them,
- (2) West Indian Perception of Cultural Differences Between Themselves and Canadians.
- (3) West Indian awareness and perception of their similarities,
- (4) The desire of West Indians to associate with like kind.

At first these themes seemed unrelated (Glazer and Strauss, 1970:290). However with constant redefinition of the different social phenomena and the reformulation of the different hypotheses they came to crystallize to form the basis of a central framework for understanding West Indian student behaviour at McMaster.

William Foote Whyte writing about his process of analysing the data for his study on Cornerville aptly describes and summarises the circumstances in which I was placed throughout the dynamic process of analysis of data. He explains the situation thus:

We study the data carefully, bringing all our powers of logical analysis to bear upon them. We come up with an idea or two. But still the data do not fall into any coherent pattern. Then we go on living with the data and with the people -- until perhaps some chance occurrence casts a totally different light upon the data, and we begin to see a pattern that we have not seen before. The pattern is not purely an artistic creation. Once we think we see it we must examine our notes and perhaps set out to gather new data in order to determine whether the pattern adequately represents the life we are observing or is simply a product of our imagination....The ideas grow up in part out of our immersion in the data and out of the

whole process of living. Since so much of this process of analysis proceeds on the unconscious level, I am sure that we can never present a full account of it. (1966:279-280).

### CONCLUSION

Participant observation as the methodology for studying West Indian students' social life at McMaster was very appropriate. As Martin Trow observed and Howard Becker and Blanche Geer agree, the problem under investigation dictates the method of investigation. (1970:150). Since I wanted to gain as much reliable quality information as possible about West Indian students, with the opportunity for great flexibility in the area of investigation, this methodology provided the scope.

In doing this research, the students generally seemed quite enthusiastic about being studied. The reasons for this I believe were,

- (1) Personal contact with the students caused them to get to know me and to understand fully what I was doing.
- (2) Many students had general and genuine interest in the study as they felt that their contribution would help to explain to other West Indians, especially newcomers what social life was like in Canada. (Trice, 1970).
- (3) Some of the students especially the graduate students and the upper level undergraduates were happy that a study was being undertaken about West Indians at McMaster.

Some of them identified with me in tackling the research project.

These especially were instrumental in giving advice.

In conclusion I would say that apart from the initial apprehension, being a participant-observer was exciting and pleasurable. Most of the students I met were likeable and I made friends with some of them. Generally, I would say, I had little trouble getting information from them. I enjoyed the parties and other social functions immensely and I learned quite a lot from the Association's sponsored speakers. All in all my field work experience was both enjoyable and educational.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEFINITION AND OPERATION OF THE IN-GROUP

Allport explains some of the characteristics of in-groups. He contends that "any cluster of people who can use the term "we" with the same essential significance" is an in-group, and "since every line, fence or boundary marks off an inside from outside, in strict logic, an in-group always implies the existence of some corresponding out-group". (1958:35). Broadly speaking then the cluster of West Indian students who frequently gather at the I.S.L. is an in-group, while others of the McMaster community who do not participate in their interaction comprises the out-group. In this chapter I shall explain (1) the nature and function of the in-group and (2) the nature of in-group/out-group relations.

#### THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE IN-GROUP

Through a process of selective association West Indian students tend to interact mainly with other West Indians. To the participant-observer this almost exclusive interaction among them is obvious. Observations at the I.S.L. revealed that most of the students entering there and remaining for any significant length of time were West Indians. Only very seldom did non West Indians participate in social interaction situations or even come into the lounge.

Because of the fact that most of the interaction among West Indians takes place within an identifiable locality, one might want to analyse the situation in terms of ecology. (Park and Burgess, 1970:140). However, locality comes about as a result of intergroup relations. As such it may not be the real basis for interaction. Using majority/minority conceptualization Arnold and Caroline Rose have noted:

The very fact that certain people are considered as minorities creates minority communities. Insofar as there is rejection of members of minorities, they are forced to live together and to associate only with each other. Even if they are dispersed throughout the country, they are assumed to be in constant association with each other, to be responsible for each other, and to have the same traits as though they were a unified and varying whole. From this viewpoint the minority becomes a product -- and effect -- of intergroup relations. (1953:220).

On a smaller scale this situation can be applied to the in-group/out-group case. In a word then, ecology, spatial considerations and locality becomes secondary to intergroup relations.

During the early weeks of the school year when the research began, the number of West Indian students using the lounge for various reasons ranged from approximately seventy-five to one hundred at any one time. As the semester progressed the number decreased somewhat, but not significantly, and attendance was more scattered. West Indian students were present in the lounge at any time during the day and early evening and sometimes at night when functions and meetings were being held. Increased numbers of students were present there at



certain specific times, such as, during students' free time, when either a class was cancelled or the student had no scheduled classes or during the break between classes or just prior to an Afro-Caribbean meeting or function. Throughout Monday and on Friday afternoon a significant increase in the number of students was quite obvious. This, I believe, was because on Friday students were anticipating the free time of the weekend and came to the lounge to be brought up to date on any upcoming weekend events or just simply to relax as it was the end of the week. Monday was the day for reporting what had transpired over the weekend.

During my period of observation, the only significant drop in student interaction occurred at Christmas and in the week just prior to and during the end of term examinations. However immediately after both Christmas and the examination period was over the number of students grew to the same proportions as during the early weeks of the school year. After this the same pattern of scattered but steady participation continued.

Interaction in the lounge was of a functional nature since the group of students saw themselves as functioning to assist each other with any social, cultural or academic problems that might arise, and also as an interaction medium to meet and socialize with other West Indians in the foreign setting. Accordingly then, certain sentiments were expressed about the place of interaction, the lounge.

One West Indian student described the lounge as "almost a home away from home". Another described it as "an oasis in the middle

of a cultural desert", where West Indians can go to get away from all the stresses of the outside. A third one explained that for him, "the international students' lounge provides security". He added, "I feel more secure when I'm with other West Indians". This kind of feeling about the lounge was generally shared by most of the students who frequented it. The other reasons cited by students as to why they came there as often as they did were as follows. Several students indicated that they went to the lounge to socialize with whoever (West Indian) was present. The following examples from the field notes illustrate this.

I'm over there all the time. Sometimes I have a class at 12:30 and it is a quarter to twelve. So I say let me go over to Wentworth, chat to whoever is there and wait until a quarter past. Sometimes when I say I am going to the library, which would be the better thing to do, I find myself over there. (14)\*

I wouldn't say that I go there a lot. I don't think I have the time to go there a lot. Personally I find that you waste a lot of time there doing nothing. You go there to find somebody to talk and eventually you are going to talk. And you are going to spend hours doing nothing but talking. So I usually pass in the lounge when I am finished for the day and I have nothing to do, when I am wondering what's new, what's going on -- find out the latest news and this sort of thing. Then I split. (7)

Others indicated that they saw the lounge as a place to get help from other West Indians, and they went there to get help if they needed it. This was explained by several students in this way:

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\*In presenting data respondents will be indentified by different numbers in parentheses at the end of each quotation where necessary.

If you want to find something out about a particular subject or prof., you go to the lounge. You ask somebody, "Are you doing so and so?" or "Do you know anybody doing this particular subject?" ... In terms of academic work you can go to the lounge and just ask anybody and you will get help with assignments. All you have to do is find out who is doing that particular subject and you would get help. (12)

If you want advice about anything -- housing, school, work, profs., if you need a ride to go anywhere you can come there and you might find someone going your way. Even rides to places like Niagara and New York are arranged in the lounge. (13)

Like we get together in Wentworth House where we discuss similar problems. Some of the problems could range from (a) problems of loneliness, not having anything to do after school, (b) problems with when you start first year courses, not knowing which course to take, whether these courses are difficult courses because the exams are multiple choice which we as West Indians are not accustomed to. (16)

Another student tried to sum up the function of student interaction in this way:

I think we get together because we identify with each other. If we are getting together because of help, oh no....It depends too on what you mean by help. I could help you by listening to your problems. In that instance -- maybe. -- Financially, I don't think so ... maybe help in the sense of the flow of feeling from one person to another, as from one West Indian to another West Indian or from a Trinidadian to another Trinidadian which could be termed help. This comes naturally, But this is only one kind of help. Maybe you help with discussing homeworks and this sort of thing. Financial help, I don't think so. If help is along the lines I just mentioned

then we do get together for help -- a more psychological kind of help which comes from being together. (7)

From observation, socializing and discussion of social and academic problems were indeed two of the functions which the group served. However since groups usually function in many ways to meet the needs of the individuals who comprise the group, other functions were noted as occurring among West Indians in the lounge as well. Students arranged to meet other students there. They held meetings and discussions there. They played dominoes and card games there. Activity in the lounge was very diverse. In a word, for West Indian students the lounge was, among other things, a party room, a recreation room, a political platform, a conference room, a meeting room, a study and reading room and a room for relaxation. Interaction here was displayed in many diverse forms, namely, verbally, emotionally, physically and psychologically. To the participant-observer, however the most salient feature in this setting was the atmosphere created by the students. One student described it as warm and friendly. Others described it as comfortable and easy. It was an atmosphere which was very conducive to the friendly and spontaneous interaction which occurred in the various ways described above.

#### THE NATURE OF INTER-GROUP RELATIONS

In-group/out-group relations does not necessarily have to be hostile. In fact unawareness of the existence of other groups is certainly a possibility. However in some instances hostile attitudes

towards contrasting groups may arise when awareness is present. The degree of intensity of attitudes towards groups may vary considerably. (Allport, 1958:47-48). Recognizing the lack of Canadian/West Indian interaction in the lounge my analytic concerns included finding an answer for this situation. These concerns would best have been answered by Canadian students themselves. However since non-interacting Canadians were not considered among my sample for investigation their feelings and attitudes were not available. Rather West Indian students whom I interviewed provided several reasons based on either their own observations or investigations as to why interaction with Canadians was almost non-existent.

Inability of some Canadians to understand the West Indian accent was suggested by one West Indian student as the reason for lack of interaction.

I was talking to a white girl who I know and I had asked her why she does not come into the lounge and meet West Indians. She told me that she would like to come in but whenever she is around West Indians she is lost because she cannot understand what they are saying. She said we speak too fast and that our accent is hard to understand. This is another reason why they don't associate with us. (12)

Another explanation for the lack of interaction was that Canadians felt attacked in company with West Indians who are discussing conflict situations and issues. A male student from Trinidad expresses this point:

I get the impression that we talk about conflict in a very emotional tone and whites in the group would think that we are attacking them. (17)

The general consensus, however, as illustrated by the following responses was that West Indians felt that in this particular setting, that is, in the lounge, Canadians would feel overwhelmed by the number of West Indian students. From their responses West Indian students seemed to empathize with the Canadians in this light. This was so because they were aware of what it feels like to be in this type of situation since most patterns of social interaction between themselves and the host society is of a similar nature. A first year Jamaican student who lived in Canada several years prior to coming to McMaster University said:

How would you feel going into a place where you were the only one of your kind. I am used to that kind of situation (meaning this kind of situation occurs often to this student). I am still scared sometimes. A white person should be scared too. (4)

A Black West Indian student declared:

Maybe they stick their heads in and see too many black people around. They figure this is a black meeting room. ... For some reason you would see them come in and stand in the entrance where they could see the whole room and sort of look in dismay. Then they turn in the other direction and they walk back out, except for some who want to use the free phone. (19)

A fourth year psychology student added:

Because of the theory of dominance. You have in effect marked out your territory. Other people then would not interfere with it because you have marked your territory out. ... You

got to admit that West Indians do dominate the lounge. So therefore it may mean that in their dominating the lounge, other people would be reluctant to come in the lounge. (7)

Further investigation into what (if any) close relationships or friendships had developed between Canadians and West Indians revealed some interesting findings. My limited observations in the classroom and in the cafeteria had revealed a picture similar to that in the lounge, that is, West Indians tended to interact mainly with other West Indians. The responses of the interviewed students indicated that friendships or relationships with Canadians were almost non-existent. Some of them reported that they had one or two Canadian friends while others, for a variety of reasons seemed very indifferent about wanting to be close friends with Canadians. They declared, "It is difficult to become friends with them", and "I just find them hard to get along with". A third year Bahamian student stated that failure of the Canadians to reciprocate her friendliness in a genuine way turned her off from wanting to be friendly with them. She said:

I can only speak from my particular experience. I don't know if West Indians try to have social relationships with anyone else in the classroom. Personally I don't try now. Let's say I don't try anymore because when I first came here I was so amazed at all these white people saying hello and how are you today and all that type of thing that I thought it was genuine. And then you find when you meet them outside of the classroom and you want to say hello or you say hello, they would not look in your particular direction. And you realize that it does not make much sense having a relationship that is so weak, existing in the classroom only. So you don't bother. I don't know whether other

West Indians have had this particular thing happen to them. But I don't really try now. (9)

Others indicated that they had only one or two Canadian friends or acquaintances. Some of these friendships were made because of particular social situations which were outside of the "normal" campus interaction. The following response, from a first year student living on campus illustrates this:

I only know one Canadian girl and I don't really socialize with her that much. She is one of my roommates. She was assigned to Bates. I say hello to some of them. I speak to some of them in class. But that's all. (21)

Another student whose home is Tobago stated:

I could say that I have only one real Canadian friend. This guy used to work in Tobago. And he and I were good friends. And we still are very good friends although I don't write to him very often. Sometimes we phone and this sort of thing. (11)

A third student stated that she was friendly with one Canadian girl because she behaved like a West Indian.

There are few Canadians that I feel I can get along with. This Canadian girl who is my friend is quite nice. She has become West Indianized. She has been going out with West Indian guys for the longest while. She is not the typical Canadian. (19)

Another student who seemed quite bitter when answering this question stated:

Well I get along with some whites. Some of them I don't care for at all. I don't have any as friends. I only have a few acquaintances. I never go to their house and they never come



to mine. We meet in the classroom and maybe we say hello when we meet on campus. Nothing more. (13)

A few students, however, had more positive feelings about Canadian friendships. Again these had specific reasons for the close interaction which developed between themselves and their Canadian friends. For instance, a male student who indicated that he had certain fundamental beliefs about friendships because he was a Christian said:

I interact with them a lot because I am in a Christian group on campus in which there are only two West Indians. ... Through this group and taking an active part in it, meeting regularly and so on I have a lot of contact with Canadians. And I have met a couple in classes. A couple of them have invited me over to their home. (17)

Another student stated:

I'd be honest. I find that I have very good interaction with them in and out of the classroom. It depends on your viewpoint in life. ... Let's develop a hypothetical case where you are going to be the enemy as such. If I am not going to know how my enemy thinks then I am going to be at a disadvantage. If I cannot think like you, at least assess where you are going, where your ideas are I don't think that I'll be able to fully match you. Interaction is necessary. (18)

A fourth year Geography student who indicated that it is possible to make friends from working and studying together stated:

Outside Afro-Caribbean I have quite a few friends. Most of them I met in the lecture room. We study together. They are Canadian. White Canadians who I have as friends are those I have met in some course or we've done work together or somebody has introduced me to them for help with work in some course. (6)

## CONCLUSION

The data presented in this chapter shows a pattern of social distance\* in personal relationships between Canadians and West Indians. This distance is emphasized by West Indian segregation and interaction in the I.S.L. The functional nature of this social interaction there makes it very unlikely that West Indian students would go to seek help outside, for banal social, cultural and personal problems. The ease of association as observed too, facilitates their interaction here as well. Along with this the group of students at the I.S.L. seems to have its own cultural universe, that is, its own norms and biases. These, of necessity, would color the perceptions of newly arrived West Indian students, thus adding them to the in-group prior to their testing of the out-group to ascertain whether they are friendly or not. This "spontaneous recruitment" of new students helps group continuity.

The segregation of students produces, according to them a majority/minority or in-group/out-group situation which deters Canadian interaction here. Elsewhere on campus too, there is little interaction as well. This in part is due to the fact that there are few existing or potential friendships between Canadian and West Indian students.

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\* Social distance is defined as, "the psychological barriers that facilitates or deter easy and spontaneous interaction." (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965).

Having established that lack of interaction is prevalent, the questions which arise now are (a) What factors influence social separation, and, (b) What keeps the West Indian group together? We shall investigate these questions in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER V

### FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL INTERACTION

West Indian students' social interaction with Canadians at McMaster University is very limited. Through a process of voluntary social separation, West Indians tend to interact mainly with other West Indians. In the previous chapter I discussed the exact nature of West Indian interaction. Here I propose to answer the questions, why and what factors influence the social separation of West Indians and Canadian students. Also I shall try to unravel the dynamic processes which facilitate group cohesion among the former.

Analysis of the data yielded four distinct reasons for the social separation of the West Indians. These four reasons I have classified broadly into two categories, namely "External" or "Push" factors and "Internal" or "Pull" factors. The former category would include those reasons which operate primarily outside the segregated area and which serve to facilitate polarization of the in-group away from the out-group. The latter category would include reasons which operate primarily within the segregated area which serve to enhance togetherness within the group. Below I have outlined these categories of reasons. To examine them more thoroughly I shall organize my presentation according to this thematic scheme.

- |                    |   |   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| EXTERNAL<br>(push) | [ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) West Indian Perception of the Way Canadians Feel About Them.</li> <li>(b) West Indian Perception of Cultural Differences Between Themselves and Canadians.</li> </ul>        |
| INTERNAL<br>(pull) | [ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) West Indian Awareness and Perception of Their Similarities In a Foreign Situation.</li> <li>(b) The Desire of West Indians to Associate With Others Of Like Kind.</li> </ul> |

#### EXTERNAL OR "PUSH" FACTORS

##### West Indian Perception of How Canadians Feel About Them.

Man's perception of his social situation allows him to form basic attitudes towards himself, towards the values of his own group, and those of the larger society. These facets of his personality develop from his contact with others, from the way they define his roles and from the manner in which he is allowed to see himself. These, of course, are all conditioned by his inherited tendencies and previous experiences. (Cooley, 1956). Charles H. Cooley's "looking glass self" which comprises others reaction to us (perceived or real), our interpretation of those reactions, and the responses to those interpretations aptly describe the social determination of the self. (1956:183). Whether the perceptions of the reactions which go to create the self are real or not is of little consequence for as W.I. Thomas has written, "If men define situations as real,

they are real in their consequences"<sup>1</sup>. Moreover too, since any perception is an awareness that emerges as a result of the most complicated weighing process an individual goes through as his mind takes into account a whole host of factors of cues, (Cantril, 1968:5) these perceptions should be treated as valid and examined accordingly.

In their limited interaction with Canadians, West Indian students perceived certain negative stereotype images<sup>2</sup> of how Canadians feel about them and behaved towards them. These, they contend, affected their attitudes and behaviour towards Canadians. These in part, provided the basis for limited intergroup relations between Canadians and West Indians.

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<sup>1</sup>This is similar to Merton's concept of "the self-fulfilling prophesy". Merton says "the public definitions of a situation (prophesies and predictions) become an integral part of the situation and thus affects subsequent developments." R.K. Merton, "The Self-Fulfilling Prophesy" in The Antioch Review, 8 (Summer, 1948) pp. 192-210.

<sup>2</sup>Stereotypes involve "the tendency to attribute general and simplified characteristics to groups of people in the form of verbal labels. These are sustained by selective perception and selective forgetting on the part of the stereotyper. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to a given category". W. Edgar Vinacke, "Stereotypes as Social Concepts" in Journal of Social Psychology, 46 (1957) p. 229. Stereotypes affect and influence behaviour. Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice, Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York, 1958, pp. 187-192.

Most West Indian students agreed that Canadians saw the West Indies as consisting primarily or almost solely of Black people. This they affirmed, was a blatant misconception since the West Indies is a very cosmopolitan society consisting of many different racial peoples. Because of this, West Indians thought that most Canadians perceived West Indians and West Indian society in terms of blackness and attributed to it the stereotypes in crime and social pathology that is usually imputed to Black societies.<sup>3</sup> Being neighbours with the United States and being more familiar with the Black situation in that society, Canadians, claimed this student, tended to infer their impressions of American Blacks on West Indians. One Black West Indian student who had worked in a predominantly white Canadian small town during the summer reported this occurrence of the assumption by Canadians that West Indians were similar to American Blacks.

Where I worked there were a lot of people who had never had a black friend or some who had never spoken to a black person. When I spoke to them I learned about some of the, what I call misconceptions they had about Blacks. I had to clarify a lot of things.  
(What kinds of things did they think that you had to clarify?)  
Things like all Black people were lazy. They

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<sup>3</sup>This analysis concerning the imputing of negative characteristics to Black societies has been pointed out by Robert B. Hills in his article, "The Strength of Black Families" in D. Brimley & C. Longino (ed.) White Racism and Black Americans, Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., Mass:1972.

committed a lot of crime, that they had a lot of illegitimate children and things like that. ... These were based on their relationship with Blacks in America. I never denied to the people in \_\_\_\_\_ that Blacks in the U.S. were my brothers and sisters. But I explained that we from the West Indies were culturally different from them. I told them it was not fair to judge us by the standards of behaviour of Blacks in the U.S. (How did they see Blacks in the U.S.?) Terribly, from the mass media and so. (6)

Another student found the same type of stereotyping occurring in another area where he worked:

Now stereotyping is something that is very prominent within this society especially with regard to Black people. For some reason, even though Blacks have proved themselves to be hard workers, they (Canadians) think that Blacks are lazy. This is the kind of thing that comes about because of the American portrayal of Blacks as janitors and things like that. -- Yes sir, no sir!! When I started working first I was conscious of the fact that they were trying to break you in, and observe you very carefully. After a while I became very good friends with the supervisor and I could have point blank conversations with him. He said that he started with the assumption that Blacks are lazy. There is no doubt about that. Why he did this was that he said that a lot of Blacks had worked for him and they were lazy. But these were not West Indian Blacks either. But then you have the conflict with Canadian Blacks as compared to the West Indian Blacks. (18)

Other negative stereotype images, as perceived and interpreted by West Indians were expressed. In trying to explain the lack of social interaction in the lounge, one student said, "Most Whites are afraid of us. They think we are barbaric." Another student had the impression that "they (Canadians) think we are crazy when they come



in and watch us talking or arguing. Some of them look really alarmed, They think we are fighting or expect a fight to break out any minute. I guess they see us as a very violent, noisy, loud people". A third student, commenting on experiences in sports explained,

Well it is always felt that the Black man is rough especially in games like soccer. ... Sometimes we are bigger than the Canadians. They think we are rough. We want to push them around. But it isn't so. ... So you would find that a referee will blow against you for no reason at all.

This strength, belligerence, and barbarism West Indians feel is attributed to them is seen as unjust and unfair.

West Indians perceived more stereotype images in the way Canadians thought they spent their leisure time. The students did not object to the fact the Canadians thought they spent their free time having fun and enjoyment, but rather to the fact that Canadians perceived fun, dancing and enjoyment as the prime or perhaps sole function of West Indians or West Indian society. The following comments explain this. A second year Trinidadian student stated:

Well I haven't mixed with Canadians to know exactly how they feel about me. The only thing I know is that they feel we are not used to anything. And too, I'm getting the idea that they still think that we live up in trees and that we dance all day.

A fourth year Antiguan student said:

I figure that they have in their minds that the West Indian man, all he does is beat the drums. They think that he is half naked, barefoot and he is beating the drum. They identify the West Indian in that light, ... We don't do that down there. We don't.

A third year Bahamian student explained:

I don't know how they see us except as people who can dance very well and people who smile a lot.

One student called these stereotypes half truths, and explained them this way:

It is O.K. to say that we are funloving. But then you shouldn't stop there. Because if you look at the ads on T.V. you will see that they say that Bayer Aspirin is the best. But in the ads they don't tell you that ten other aspirins met as high a standard as Bayer. So saying that all West Indians do is have fun and leaving it at that is a little too much because there are other things that West Indians do well, or even Black people for that matter. They are politicians. They are school teachers and everything. (11)

The perceived stereotype which seemed to anger West Indian students most was that Canadians thought that they were either not as intelligent as Canadians or inferior and stupid. The students complained that Canadians' derogatory reference to West Indians as natives severely offended them since similar reference was not made to Europeans or Englishmen. The general consensus of the West Indian group was that these derogatory feelings were very prevalent and in many instances Canadians who would interact with West Indians would do so in this light. (Allport, 1958:187-192). As one Black West Indian student declared, "Just because you are Black and you are from the West Indies they think you are stupid!" Some students too, very aware of this stereotype image explained that they felt "funny and unsure" about asking questions in the classroom because they did not

want "to compound their nativeness with stupidity". This they thought would serve to reinforce the image that Canadians had of them.

Most of the examples of this type of stereotyping were displayed in the classroom because West Indian presence and participation there was absolutely necessary. Students went to great lengths to explain some of what transpired there. As a student remarked:

These Canadians think that they are superior to us. Another thing which happens in the classroom is that the Canadian students are always surprised when a West Indian student gets a good mark. They take your paper and scrutinize it as though they can't believe that you could write a paper like that. Some of them even ask you if you did it yourself. When your mark is higher than theirs they seem disturbed. They don't realize that we can work hard too and we do. Some West Indian students excel in some subjects just like some Canadians. Others don't do as well just like some Canadians. Canadians believe that all we are good for is dancing and having a good time. They don't realize or want to accept the fact that we work too. They are disturbed when they find that out. (How do you know that they are disturbed?) Because they keep asking you over and over about sources, how long it took you to do it and things like that. You can see the displeasure on their faces. This is because they cannot understand how you who is supposed to be lesser can do better than them. (16)

In the same vein another student remarked:

If you a brilliant person in the class they tend to treat you differently. ... They become very friendly towards you. If you are dumb they behave differently. They say this is typical of West Indian students. If you are brilliant they tend to treat you as an exceptional student and they ask you if you went to high school in Canada. They never attach your

brilliance to your formal schooling in the West Indies. They think that you are smart because you have been schooled in Canada or that you have been here for sometime. (20)

Students felt that even professors were guilty of stereotyping West Indians. Commenting about the professors' attitudes one student said:

He does not think that your education before coming to university is of a high standard compared to the system which they have there. He feels -- He knows that we all are the cream of the West Indies. But he thinks that the West Indian cream can't be compared with the Canadian. So if you do a good paper he is surprised. And if you do well he is surprised. ... He does not expect you to do such a good paper. For example, I remember once I did a paper for a prof, and he was surprised by how well I had done it. He asked me where I had gone to school, how come my English was that good and things like that. This was because I was West Indian. If it was a Canadian that question would not have been asked. He assumed that West Indians cannot produce good papers. They are not aware of the fact that you come from under the British system of education.(11)

The data presented in this section show overwhelming agreement among West Indian students about the negative stereotypes which they perceive Canadians attribute to them. Throughout the interviews no positive comments about the stereotypes were mentioned.

Coolley and Mead explain that as expectations are communicated to the individual by the behaviour of his associates his responses are modified so as to conform to or deny these expectations. (Mead, 1934). West Indian students by their attitudes and behaviour chose to deny these expectations (stereotypes). The resulting limited interaction with Canadians can be viewed as a defense mechanism or

as a way of not complying with the others expectations of them. Moreover too, since Katz and Braly (1933, 1935) state that, "Racial prejudice is...a generalized set of stereotypes..." and Simpson and Yinger (1958) agree that prejudice and stereotypes are "almost synonymous", one might conclude that West Indian students perceived this negative stereotyping as prejudice or racism and thus preferred not to interact with Canadians who had stereotypic images of them and might thus be racist; hence the lack of Canadian/West Indian interaction.

#### West Indian Perception of Canadian Cultural Differences

Human culture is by definition symbolic; all meanings, expectations and understandings are couched in symbolic communication and learned through symbolic interaction with others. (Cooley, 1956; Goffman, 1959). Since symbols change with time and place, most cultures are different. Accordingly cultural norms, the "guideposts of culture" are also different.

Because of this difference, when two cultures meet the problem of ethnocentrism arises since in all societies a large number of people tend to take their own culture as a "standard of normalcy" by which all other cultures are judged. Accordingly they perceive another culture as strange or unusual. Ranking or the investing of superior status to ones own culture and generalizing or stereotyping are two characteristics of ethnocentric thinking. The more another group differs from one's own, the more one is likely to generalize about its social characteristics and to hold over-simplified attitudes

towards its members and to rank it as lesser than one's own group. (Rose, 1964). According to Peter I. Rose this "ranking according to one's own standards and categorizing them into generalized stereotypes together serve to widen the gap between 'they' and 'we'." (1964:76). West Indian students, by their attitudes and behaviour, practice ethnocentrism.

Cultural differences in significant social and cultural areas were perceived by West Indian students and given as a contributory reason which prohibited spontaneous West Indian/Canadian interaction. In many cases West Indian students compared Canadian cultural behaviour with their own in the West Indies and through ethnocentric lenses saw a very negative picture of Canadian habits and values. There was no difference in value judgements and perception between those students who had only recently arrived from the West Indies and those who had been in Canada for four or five years. Only one student who had attended high school in Canada thought very positively about Canadian culture. For the others it seemed that, instead of the process of acculturation taking place, a kind of negative tolerance for the way Canadians behaved existed especially among those who were returning home after their degree was completed. The following are some of the comments and perceptions of Canadian culture. In most instances I shall include only one or two comments about the different areas mentioned since many scattered references were made to the same area.

### PACE OF LIFE

In their assessment of Canadian culture West Indian students felt that it was a struggle to keep up with the Canadian pace of living especially since they were accustomed to a "slow kind of lack-a-daisical pace" at home. One student remarked, "I was wondering why people move so fast over here. Like I stood on Yonge Street the first day I was here and people just went whizzing by. People are walking as though they were crazy." Other cultural differences were noted in specific areas as illustrated below.

### FOOD

West Indian students complained about the Canadian diet. They explained that Canadians prepare food in a way that makes it not very tasty for West Indians. Canadians, they contend, season food very little and only after cooking, while they eat very highly seasoned foods which is seasoned prior to its cooking. This difference, they claimed, significantly changes the taste of the food. Added to this, the students complained about the frequent use of potatoes in the Canadian diet in place of rice which West Indians have daily in their diet at home. A student who lived on campus and participated in the university meal plan said:

I found certain of the foods very unpalatable.(17)  
Another student stated that for West Indian functions the cooking of a West Indian meal is important.

For the party we decided to cook because we know the problem. And one girl commented that she was so happy to see rice because she is in the dormitory and she has been eating potatoes all the time.

### LANGUAGE (Ways of expressing certain things)

Language is a very crucial and important means of communication. Consequently any difficulty in understanding or interpreting conversation can seriously retard or halt interaction. Although West Indian students of different national origins may express themselves somewhat differently, this difference was not considered significant enough to hamper communication in any way among them. However, according to the students the difference between their way of expressing themselves and the Canadians', along with the Canadian inability to understand the West Indian accent and sense of humour was a problem which came about because of cultural differences. As a result of this cultural difference conversation with Canadians lacked spontaneity because simple words or expressions had to be explained to the Canadians. For example, when West Indians used colloquial expressions or words such as, "mamaguy", "tabanka", or "to put milk in your coffee", etc. their meanings would have to be explained if Canadians were to understand what was meant. Moreover too, some Canadians, it was explained, had difficulty in understanding what they termed the West Indian "sing-song" accent. This problem of difficulty in communication was explained by two students in the following way:



With Canadians you have to think about what you are saying. Certain jokes you have to explain carefully. There is no spontaneity. Sometimes Canadians do not understand exactly what you are saying. (19)

We also have to get used to speaking slowly, saying whatever we have to say twice; not making our own jokes anymore because Canadians don't get the humour that is in them. They don't understand that we are saying to start with. (9)

#### IN CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS (Christmas)

Holidays are culturally symbolic occasions. Consequently how one celebrates a holiday is dependent on ones culture or cultural heritage. West Indian students agreed that because of cultural differences Canadians celebrated holidays very differently from West Indians. In the West Indies a holiday, such as Christmas is celebrated with lots of festivities and door to door visiting. In Canada, the students said, holidays, especially those which fall during the wintertime are "closed affairs". A students who had spent two Christmases in Canada said:

And it is difficult on a holiday especially when you are new here. This is another problem. On holidays would be the time when you get homesick because at home, especially during Christmas time you would have a good time. But Christmas here is a closed affair. You even miss the Christmas carols. ... You can't even get the Christmas spirit. (12)

DRINKING

West Indian students explained that they had the ability to enjoy themselves without the need for the heavy use of alcohol. It was explained by the students that they could spend their leisure time doing things other than consuming large amounts of alcohol which seemed to be the prime pastime of Canadians. They said that alcohol played a very important part in the lives of most Canadians. This, they affirmed, was not the case in the West Indies.

I can't spend all my free time in a pub drinking beer. Canadians believe that to have a good time means drinking gallons of beer and getting drunk or high. Alcohol plays an important part on Canadian campuses at all levels. ... I drink beer but it is not the prime way of spending my free time, like many Canadians. (22)

Canadians don't really like to sit down and talk just so. (Meaning that Canadians can't sit down and talk for any time without a drink). Canadians have their own idea of fun and West Indians have their own ideas of fun. (What is the Canadian idea of fun?)

From what I have gained from looking at them in residence, they prefer to go every night to the "John" and drink. Then they come back and say, I was drunk and what not. I think that this is not the typical West Indian idea of fun. The way I see Canadians consume beer is as though it is water. People drink to get drunk rather than to be sociable. I don't drink myself. I have a brother who drinks and he does not drink as heavily as them. He would have some friends over and he would have a case of beer and when those friends leave there would be more than half of the case left. West Indians don't drink to see how much they can drink in a short space of time. (17)

### IN MALE/FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

West Indians perceived different moral standards and values with regard to male/female relationships operating in Canadian society as compared to West Indian. This cultural difference was especially acute for West Indian women more so than West Indian men since the former are used to a more authoritarian situation in the West Indies. In Canada, West Indian female students found themselves caught in a double bind. While they would like to date male students, they found it difficult to interact with them in this society which they described as sexually permissive in terms of male/female relationships. West Indian men having been accustomed to a more permissive lifestyle in the West Indies found very little difficulty in adjusting to the sexual mores. The plight of the West Indian female is summed up by a male student in this way:

Well as a result of that (maintaining West Indian values) the West Indian girl becomes very isolated and sooner or later they change their behaviour patterns because they have to fit into Canadian society. And the Canadian society is such that it is very permissive in that male and female have close interaction with each other. The West Indian girl then changes her values because of the fact that she realizes that she is not being dated because she subscribes to those values which she has learned from her parents in the West Indies. (16)

### IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

West Indian students complained that Canadian society was very impersonal. They explained that Canadian relationships or "friendships"

were cold and not genuine; some of them existing in the classroom only or solely on campus. This impersonality was not restricted to Canadian/West Indian relationships but even between Canadians themselves, the students agreed. This kind of coldness and impersonality which was described as a cultural manifestation, is not present in the West Indies according to the students. The following statements explain how the students felt:

Even if they (Canadians) don't like you they pretend. You will know it because they will smile with you and they won't like you. In the States they show you right out that they don't like you. But here you get a nice smile. A smile which is false. It is just stuck on. It is artificial. It reminds me of the circus. You know when the clown puts on his broad grin and then it quickly closes up. This is the kind of thing you have here. (12)

Well first of all culturally, you know West Indians are different from Canadians culturally. We are a warmer people and so it is difficult when you first come to understand the coldness of the Canadians. The first day I came to campus I was sick. I was lonely, homesick and everything. Nobody took you in. I would look straight at people and smile at them but they would hardly smile back. It was not like at home at all where everybody you meet you say good morning to. I couldn't understand it. I came to realize that this is the Canadian way. Now it does not bother me as much. (5)

After you have tried to tell a couple hi a few times you just give up. You say hi and they just give you this very strange smile that I have not grown accustomed to yet. I find Canadians cold. They stick to themselves. You know sometimes I would decide to talk to someone in class, then when I see them outside of the classroom I would say hello to them and they would just stare at you. (19)

For example, my cousin has been up here for about three months and he cannot stand it. He gets in the elevator and he says good morning and everybody is just looking up at the numbers to see when they reach their floor. This thing is driving him nuts. And I have to keep telling him that this is the way society works. This is Rome! This is the way Rome works! We are in Rome! Back home you get into the elevator and we have to speak to everybody on it. But here you get into the elevator and everybody is doing his own thing. We are not used to that at all. (7)

Even in academics differences were perceived. These were described by some West Indians as a manifestation of Canadian culture. One student who reported that she was intimidated by the apparent "knowledge" of the Canadians when she first arrived stated this:

I found that the first thing that we have to face (in the classroom) is that these Canadians sound so educated. They get up in class and spout off a whole lot of words. They have been educated that way. They have been educated in a system where you talk as much as possible and sound as big as possible and you get by. (9)

Only two students, when asked said positive things about the Canadian way of life. One student who had attended high school in Canada said:

I went to high school here. Most of my real social life, dating, etc. I have spent here. I have adopted the Canadian culture. It is very good. I don't want to live in Jamaica again. I have not gone back since I left. From what I have read I prefer to live in Canada. The only thing I hate about Canada is the climate. (4)

Another student who had lived for some time in another foreign country which she described as very unfriendly stated that compared to the people of that country, Canadians, though sometimes impersonal were

much friendlier than the people of the previous country where she lived.

On campus, I found people to be friendlier here than in \_\_\_\_\_. Here even if the Canadians don't want to speak to you, they will say hello. They would associate with you during class time. I have not had problems here. For example when you have to get into groups in phys. ed. I have always got a partner. (12)

The data presented in this section explains the cultural differences which West Indians perceive existing between themselves and Canadians. In summary West Indians perceived significant differences in the pace of life, food, language and expression, in celebrating holidays, in male/female relationships and in some aspects of academics and especially in interpersonal relationships. The negative expressions concerning the various differences reveal the West Indian students' attitude toward Canadian culture. Most of these perceived differences are as a result of negative stereotyping through ethnocentric ranking since ethnocentrism prevents objective and accurate assessments of differences among different cultural groups. (Rose, 1964).

#### INTERNAL OR "PULL" FACTORS

##### West Indian Perception of their Similarities

Further investigation into selective association among West Indian students disclosed that they themselves considered several reasons for their selective and positive interaction. It was suggested that segregation occurred because possibly West Indians did not want to expose themselves so that Canadians could get an insight into their

activities and culture. This might create the desire among Canadians to participate in West Indian culture, and this cultural contact might enhance acculturation. Separation was necessary the students declared, in order to resist the effects of Canadianization which would occur if these two cultures intermixed freely. This desire to resist the overpowering influence of the host society is evident among certain religious groups, for example the Hasidic Jews of Williamsburg in Brooklyn (Dean and Rosen, 1955) and the Hutterites who live in the prairie provinces of Canada and in the plains states of the United States. (Conkin, 1964). These groups avoid all intergroup activities as they believe that certain of their cultural traditions may be threatened by the overpowering influence of the host society. Commenting on the Hasidic Jews resistance to Americanization Dean and Rosen state:

Resistance to Americanization is such that although there is no physical wall to isolate them, a strong "sociological wall" separates this group from the activities that might encroach on its cultural stability. All the institutions, including the economic activities of the group, are such that they are conducive to a Hasidic "way of life". (1955:58).

Another speculation made by a Trinidad student was expressed in terms of group size. Here it was suggested that with any small group, just because its members were few in number as compared to the host society, association among its members would take place. Moreover the students thought, a certain "magic" number made positive spontaneous interaction more likely. One student explained it in this way:

It is not like in Toronto where there are so many (West Indian students on campus) that they don't know each other or like in Guelph or Waterloo where there are so few that they ignore each other. We have just the right number here at McMaster. I don't know what that 'magic' number is.  
(19)

While these suggestions may be valid in trying to explain the selective association among West Indians they were not shared by all members of the West Indian community. The overwhelming general consensus among West Indians was that positive interaction and association came about because of West Indian perception of their similarities despite the actual heterogenous nature of the West Indian population and background.

West Indians perceived similarities in their present social situation vis-a-vis Canadian culture and they viewed similarities in their culture and historical past as a basis for interaction. This situation of interaction through perception is consistent with Shibutani and Kwan's contention that what is of decisive importance in interaction is that, "human beings interact not so much in terms of what they actually are but in terms of the conceptions that they form of themselves and of one another". (1965:38). West Indians interacted with other West Indians because they perceived themselves as similar. Whether this perception is accurate or not is of little consequence since,

"the manner in which a person identifies himself, regardless of the accuracy of his beliefs, is a matter of crucial importance, for what he does or does not do depends largely upon his conception of



himself. (Therefore) when a person classifies himself within some ethnic category<sup>4</sup> he assumes that he is endowed with those attributes in terms of which the category is defined. Even if he himself does not feel the endowed traits, he often believes he should". (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965:41).

This "consciousness of kind" or sympathetic identification with others in the category creates a feeling of unity based on perceptions of resemblances. (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965:40). This perception of similarities presupposes a perception of differences from others. These factors altogether provide the basis for identification and cohesiveness in the group. (Shibutani and Kwan, Ibid).

Although West Indian society is very heterogenous, as explained earlier, students perceived certain similarities. The following illustrations by two students -- a male Jamaican and a female Barbadian -- will explain these similarities:

I think we get together because we identify with each other. ... I think we get together because of identification and we know we share the same problem. ... We do share the same problems, the same lifestyle. We are in the same foreign country and things like this. (18)

We are similar in many ways that it is easier for us to get along. Also there are so many problems that one will have to face outside, why should one risk living with someone that one does not know and who might turn out to be a bad or dissimilar person. We share the same kinds of problems. We share the same kind of background. (21)

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<sup>4</sup>Ethnic category is used here as defined by Shibutani and Kwan -- a group of people who conceive of themselves as being of a kind. (1965:41).

Similar colloquial expressions in language which facilitated easy communications were seen by West Indian students as an important factor which pushed them to associate. West Indians agreed that in their everyday language they used certain words or expressions which are not in the dictionary, and if they are there they would have a completely different meaning when used by them. Only other West Indians or people familiar with the West Indian situation would understand these words. Such words as, "mamaguy";<sup>5</sup> "tabanka", "Jah", "Babylon", or expressions like "vieux neg", "mauvaix langue", "I and I", "to put milk in your coffee", "to have put cocoa in the sun so you are looking for rain", are used frequently in West Indian conversation. One Trinidadian student commenting on the situation with colloquial language said:

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\* These words and expressions have the following meanings when used in West Indian parlance.

- mamaguy - To make fun of somebody by either heckling or teasing him or her.
- tabanka - The emotional pain one suffers with the loss of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Jah - God
- Babylon - Police
- vieux neg- literally means "old nigger" from the French "vieux negro". When used in the West Indies it means someone of a very disreputable character.
- mauvais - The literal translation from French is "bad tongue". When  
langue used in the West Indies it means "to bad mouth someone", that is to say bad things about him or her.
- I and I - The two of us,
- to put milk in your coffee - To marry someone of a lighter complexion so that your offspring would be of a lighter complexion.
- To have put cocoa in the sun,.. - To have done or said something wrong so you are on your guard to defend yourself. Similar to the English expression, "Who the cap fits will draw the string".

Here (in Canada) you are lost, lost among the crowd. So when you get into the lounge -- you talk the same language. When I say talk the same languages, I don't mean English. At least you understand each other. You can go down in dialect and everybody will understand you, or most people I should say. Your way of life is the same. You see things the same way. (12)

Another student commenting on similarities among West Indians said:

West Indians -- I identify with them. I feel comfortable with them. I talk to them. I understand them. They understand me. We speak the same language.

Understanding and speaking West Indian colloquialisms is such an important factor that it enhances interaction even with Canadians as illustrated by the following example. One student stated that he was friendly with a Canadian because he understood the colloquialisms of the West Indies.

Well here is a good example that might help to clarify what I am saying. Take for instance \_\_\_\_\_. I identify with him more than I do with other Canadians. He has come to the West Indians and he has seen things for himself. He has made an effort to learn the different things, like colloquial words like "mamaguy"; words which are not in the dictionary. ... So with him although he is Canadian he understands so it is not difficult to converse with him. (17)

Because of similar cultural backgrounds too, West Indians felt that they understood and tolerated certain behaviour among themselves.

This behaviour, they said, might appear strange or bizzare to Canadians. The situation of gathering together and heckling each other was mentioned:

Well you might tend to interact with somebody from a similar culture or background. This interaction might be easier. For instance, I myself and a few West Indians might sit down and have a lime<sup>6</sup> and throw some fatigue<sup>7</sup> at each other and what not. It is more free that way.

And you are meeting people who know what you are talking about. You can play the fool<sup>8</sup> with something which is very serious, just make fun of it. With Canadians it does not go over very well. Like one day I was thinking when I go in there (the lounge) I feel so good. As soon as I walk in the door if \_\_\_\_\_ is in there he has something bad<sup>9</sup> to tell me. It does not offend me or anything. But if a Canadian should come in and he said something slightly close to what he tells me, he (the Canadian) would be offended at it, maybe because they don't know him, maybe, like at home you are accustomed to people heckling you when you are passing, so it is nothing new. But the Canadians would not understand this. (19)

The data presented in this section explain the reasons why West Indians associate and interact positively with each other. Language similarities and similarities in culture and history as well as the perception of their present social situation were given as reasons for the social phenomenon.

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<sup>6</sup>Lime - This is a West Indian colloquial word with means "an impromptu gathering usually for light conversation and joking.

<sup>7</sup>fatigue - This is a West Indian colloquial word which means "to heckle" or "to tease".

<sup>8</sup>play the fool - This means "to make light of" or "to joke about".

<sup>9</sup>to have something bad to say - This means "to tease by using derogatory remarks".

### West Indian Desire To Associate With Like Kind

The perception of sameness or closeness of cultural habits and norms among West Indians and the resulting identification gave rise to a desire among them to associate with like kind. Interaction within this perceived homogenous group was easy and spontaneous. Allport attributes this preference for association with like kind to the fact that "we find comfort and ease in our own class. And normally there are plenty of people of our own class or race or religion to play, live and eat with and to marry". (1958:18). This desire to associate with 'similar' people was expressed throughout the interviews by the constant usage of phrases such as, "my own kind of people", "people of their own kind", "people who are their own", "people who are your own", "people who you know", "to your people" or "with your own people". The following two comments give the general flavour of what was said. A student from Trinidad declared:

I think it is basically why does anybody feel the need to stay around people of their own kind. Animals, for example, -- birds of a feather stick together. And it is basically that you know these people and you identify with them for so long and now that you're here you tend to stick together. (7)

A Bahamian student said:

You get together with people who understand you, with people who have the same historical background as you. You can make your own kind of jokes and even if they are jokes particular to your own country, with limited explanation everything becomes clear. Basically most of the West Indians are alike in a whole

lot of aspects. Just being with people who are your own kind and also the idea of being untouched by all that is going on around. (9)

Another student from Antigua stated that a general kind of ease, comfort, trust and security was felt among West Indians

A West Indian generally feels more comfortable knowing that other West Indians are around in case he or she feels lonely ... They have the same values. They talk about the same thing, same problems. This is one of the reasons. Each of them experience loneliness and they can comfort each other when they are in that state. (16)

Echoing these same sentiments was another student from Jamaica:

I have to add that West Indians on campus tend to trust other West Indians more readily than they would anybody else. Most naturally they see somebody who is sharing their own problem, who is experiencing the same difficulty, who is a foreign student like themselves. This makes them accept them (other West Indians) more readily. (18)

It is not my intention to convey the idea that the gathering of West Indians at the I.S.L. is altogether a completely cohesive, smooth functioning group. As with any group of people there will be sub-groups, cliques and the like. With the West Indian group fragmentation (to what ever extent it exists) can be facilitated by the students' actual heterogenous situation, that is, from their differences in country of origin, academic department, level attained at university, through sex differentials or possibly mere differences in interests and personality. From observation however, these differences do not interfere significantly with the interaction process among the students,

as students are free to interact with whoever was present there. Overall then there is little obvious fragmentation among the students because of the strong desire among them to associate with other West Indian students.

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained the "external" and "internal" factors which operate in West Indian group process, that is, the factors or series of happenings which occur often enough to give rise to the situation of group formation and cohesion among West Indian students. Perception of stereotyping and ethnocentrism are the two "external" characteristics, while perceived similarities and the desire to associate with like kind are the "internal" characteristics.

In the "external" area both perception of stereotyping and ethnocentrism have the effect of creating social distance between the host society and the West Indian students. Both factors, too, operate separately in a cyclical way with the phenomenon of social distance. Perception of negative stereotyping creates social distance. This leads to inadequate understanding between the groups. Lack of communication which results reinforces inadequate understanding and leads to more stereotyping. (Newcomb, 1950). In the same manner, ethnocentrism, though a positive estimate of an individual's feelings towards his own group and its members can also serve to increase antipathy towards others. (Gittler, 1949:43-47). This antipathy is

a deterrent to group interaction. Lack of interaction results in a misunderstanding on another's culture. This then reinforces ethnocentrism. In a word then, social distance or limited inter-group relations is the result of 'external' forces. It constitutes the first phase in West Indian group process.

Once social distance is created the situation of similarity and differences are evident. Also since the response to negative stereotyping is withdrawal from the host society, such withdrawal with the West Indian students is done "en masse." "Internal" factors then create a situation for spontaneous and frequent interaction. The factors of perceived similarity and the desire to associate with others of like kind are the 'internal' characteristics. These operate in a concerted way to foster spontaneous and easy interaction within the group and thus keep it together. These factors constitute the second phase in West Indian group process.



## CHAPTER VI

### 'PUSH' AND 'PULL' FACTORS IN WEST INDIAN GROUP PROCESS

#### Effect of and Necessity for Both Sets of Factors

West Indian group formation and cohesion is a complex process which must be explained using a comprehensive approach. The relationship which West Indians have with the host society along with the heterogeneity of West Indian society make such a approach necessary. Both "external" or "push" factors and "internal" or "pull" factors contribute to the process of West Indian group formation and cohesion since this comes about as a result of both the relationship between themselves and Canadians as social units as well as the interpersonal relations among West Indians themselves;

Analysis of social elements which affect West Indian group process reveals that the "external" factors are perception of stereotyping and certain ethnocentric behaviour. These factors obviously arise as a result of relations between the West Indian students (who can be termed either, "the minority", the "in-group" or the "less dominant group" depending on one's conceptualization) and Canadians. West Indian students perceive certain stereotyped images and behaviour consistent with this stereotyping being displayed by Canadians. They also perceive certain cultural differences between themselves and the host society -- differences in culture which they rank below their

own cultural norms and which they view in a very negative light. Their behavioural response to this perception is withdrawal from the host society. This withdrawal is the first phase in West Indian group process. The process of withdrawal by which the in-group is created may not always be completely observable or recognizable to the West Indian students, especially the new ones. They might not be fully aware that their participation and belonging to an in-group is an effect of intergroup relations. For example, the new student on entering McMaster for the first time may seek out the West Indian community presumably through preference, without necessarily feeling that this association is enforced by the group. This quest for familiar people, especially in the early stages of life at McMaster is borne out by the following dialogue with two first year students who at the time of the interview had only been at McMaster for a week or so.

(I wonder if we can get into something about social interaction. Like who do you prefer to be with?)

Student A West Indians, without a doubt.  
(Why?)

Student A Of course that is where I come from. I mean I was glad to see a West Indian when I was walking around.

Student B You wouldn't believe it. That is true.

Student A I was just looking around for one. Not that I am insecure or anything. But naturally you are landed in this university and you see all these strange faces all around you.

Student B Yeah, on registration day I was kind of scared. I think I saw only three Black faces which I assumed were West Indians. I said to my sister, "What kind of university you chose for me to come to! I am not seeing any West

Indians. I am going to be lost in this place." She said, "no, there are lots of West Indians. You are new and you are not meeting them yet." But girl it was something else. Well Gilmour Hall used to be my base. I used to come there and then I would find everywhere from there. I would go and sit down on a sort of bench there. I did not know anybody or where to find these Black faces. So I just used to sit there and be kind of depressed, not really depressed, but you weren't happy. You weren't relaxed. (5)

However later these students learned that their operation as an in-group occurred not only because of their quest for like people but because of the in-group existence in relation to an out-group that "assigns" it differential status.

Scholars like Louis Wirth (1964), Judith Kramer (1970) and James Quinn (1950), analysing ethnic group formation have organized their analysis in terms of intergroup relations and behaviour. They conclude that group formation and cohesion comes about as a result of out-group (usually the majority) relationship and treatment of the in-group (usually the minority). According to Louis Wirth the essence of such behaviour is relations of strangers where, individuals in the in-group are "treated as members of a category, irrespective of their individual merits". (1964:246). The result of such a relationship and treatment is the polarization of the two groups. The nature of the in-group or minority situations and the processes that isolate the in-group from the general community have been explained by these sociologists in the following ways. Kramer states that,

The dominant group by definition embodies the prevailing way of life; it controls access to values that are now desired by others, but still too scarce to be shared, by defining criteria of social eligibility. By declaring as ineligible those with differing characteristics, the dominant group limits their life chances and thereby creates a minority situation. ... Minority groups are thus the product of the dominant group's power to establish its way of life as normative and to pass on the eligibility of its participants. Those who are defined as ineligible become as unequal as they are treated. ... The minority situation is thus truly a matter of "when people meet" and not of mere coexistence, peaceful or otherwise. (1970:4).

In a similar vein, Wirth has written:

People because of physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from others in the society for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination... Minority group carries with it exclusion from full participation in a society's life. Minorities are deprived of certain economic, political and social privileges, are held in lower esteem, are generally socially isolated and spatially segregated, restricted in access to education, employment, and voluntary associations. They suffer from extraordinary social and economic insecurity. (1964:245).

James A. Quinn views group formation from the standpoint of segregation:

Segregation may be thought of as a process or state whereby people are separated or set apart. As such it serves to place limits upon social interaction. Segregation finds one form of expression in discrimination, where individuals are afforded differential treatment by virtue of their membership in a particular group. But discrimination should not be thought of as a practice exclusively limited to members of the dominant

group; racial and ethnic minorities may discriminate against members of the dominant group, but their ability to do so is usually quite limited. (1950:352).

The negative treatment which is given to the minority or in-group is claimed to be based on social differences such as race, religion, ethnicity, language, occupation, social class and even ideologies. How these categories are defined socially is more important than actual social differences (Kramer, 1970:4) since hostilities are meted out to individuals or groups based on these definitions. These hostilities vary in degree from antilocution to discrimination to avoidance to physical attack and to even extermination. (Allport, 1958:48). Rose and Rose conceptualize them as "facets of minority problems" (Rose and Rose, 1953:13) and explain the specific treatment as follows:

In the first place, there is an attitude of hatred, sometimes called prejudice, towards all minority groups. Sometimes the specific content of the attitude is predominantly that of fear; at other times it seems to be composed mainly of disgust. Although fear and disgust are both attitudes that tend to be associated with separation and withdrawal, the main type of action that the majority takes with respect to the minority is that of maintaining its own superiority. Withdrawal is only superficial; the main effort is directed at holding the minority down. The major rationalization belief supporting this action is that the majority group is biologically superior, or that at least biologically different, in mental capacity and emotional stability. The deliberate holding down of the minority is commonly called discrimination. The term 'discrimination'

is also used to express individual tastes, but -- it is necessary to repeat -- that is not what is meant by discrimination in inter-group relations. Discriminations can easily be discerned as the majority group not allowing members of the minority to have the same or equivalent opportunities as are afforded members of the majority group. ... The discrimination under consideration is that which comes into operation solely because of an individual's race, color, or national origin, and not because of his ability, manners, personality, wealth or anything else. (1953:13-14).

The "internal" factors, as analysed are perception of similarities among West Indians or "consciousness of kind" and their desire to associate with like kind. These social elements operate primarily within the in-group itself. They take into account the actual behaviour of the individual members of the group and how they relate to each other. These internal factors are necessary for group cohesion. West Indian students perceived certain similarities among them; similarities in some aspects of culture, for example, language, ways of spending spare time, historical past, etc. These perceived similarities created a desire among them to associate with each other. From observation such association was very often as students came to the lounge to meet and socialize with each other almost every day, and for several hours per day. Group cohesion was thus fostered.

The merits of the "consciousness of kind" conceptualization and "in-group formation approach have been outlined by several researchers. Shibutani and Kwan (1965) have written:

When those who are classified together do conceive of themselves as being alike, however, there develops among them a 'consciousness of kind', which plays a decisive part in their lives. This feeling or unity arises from a perception of resemblances among themselves and differences from outsiders. Any readily visible means of identification -- similarity of physical attributes, distinctive modes of dress, or a common language -- certainly facilitates the development of such awareness. ... This conviction that they are fundamentally alike enables people in some ethnic categories to become cohesive groups and to engage in effective concerted action. Men more easily believe they are alike when they think they are descended from a common ancestor, for 'consciousness of kind' may rest upon a common culture. But what is presumed to be inherited is of decisive importance. (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965:44).

Allport has claimed that:

Everywhere on earth we find a condition of separateness among groups. People mate with their own kind. They eat, play, reside in homogenous clusters. They visit with their own kind, and prefer to worship together. Much of this automatic cohesion is due to nothing more than convenience. There is no need to turn to out-groups for companionship. With plenty of people at hand to choose from, why create for ourselves the trouble of adjusting to new languages, new foods, new cultures, or to people of a different educational level? Thus most of our business of life can go on with less effort if we stick together with our own kind. (1958:17-18).

Other sociologists, for example, Rose and Rose and Robin Williams, have also emphasized similar internal factors. These sociologists conceptualize the formation and cohesion process in terms of identification. Rose describes the phenomenon as "a positive desire to

identify oneself as a member of a group and a feeling of pleasure when one does so identify himself", (1953:178), while Williams explains that, "like circumstanced members of a social category will come increasingly to have a sense of common identity which will tend to increase their within-category interaction and reduce their contacts with outsiders". (1966:46). This identification produces togetherness and group cohesion. This enables the group to withstand or deal with any problems in intergroup relations. Togetherness and cohesiveness then constitutes the second phase of group process.

Internal factors too, are very important in West Indian group formation because of the number of diverse characteristics that comprise this society. Cohesiveness among West Indian students would be lacking since the heterogenous nature of the group could cause fragmentation or cause the group to be beset by cleavages among its members because of divergent backgrounds or differences in national origin, race, culture or even interests. Along with this, since it has been empirically shown that individuals with visibly different characteristics experience differential treatment vis-a-vis the host society, (Henry, 1965), the different visible characteristics of the West Indians may cause such a situation, with the response on the part of the students being of differential degrees of group belonging or participation.

It becomes evident that West Indian group formation and cohesion has to be explained using both internal and external factors. Any analysis which includes either only internal or external factors



would provide a one-sided and hence incomplete picture. Moreover, certain situations or behaviour can owe their origin and process of becoming not to one factor but to a variety of factors and sequences. From analysis we see several distinct factors operating in West Indian group process. Each of these factors plays a significant part in this social situation and these should all be considered. It is easy but dangerous to follow a one-track explanation. As Karl Pearson aptly observed, "No phenomenon or stage in sequence has only one cause. ... When we scientifically state cause we are really describing the successive stages of a routine experience". (1936:130). What is needed therefore to adequately explain West Indian group formation and cohesion is an incorporation of all the elements within the internal and external factors. Any theory or explanation which incorporates these will enable us to handle these factors within a unified conceptual scheme. Relevant factors will be functional parts of an interdependent process.

From analysis then, one can conclude that the three conceptual approaches which form the basis of this thesis provide factors which operate in a unified scheme to account for West Indian group process:

- (1) Symbolic Interaction Theory provides the social factors of West Indian perception of the way Canadians feel about them, and West Indian perception of cultural differences between themselves and Canadians.

(2) Consciousness of kind approach provides the emphasis upon West Indian perception of their similarities and differences = from Canadians.

(3) In-group/out-group approach provides the theme of the desire of West Indians to associate with others of like kind.

These factors, operating together as they do function in a two phase procedure to produce group formation and cohesion among West Indian students; phase one being a "push" away from the host society, and phase two being a "pull" together towards group cohesion.

While exclusive pre-occupation with one factor or set of factors leads to an incomplete picture, emphasis on functional interdependence of factors should not obliterate but rather accentuate the weights of various factors operative at a given time. Change of weights can change the entire process and outcome. With West Indian group formation equal weight is given to both internal and external factors.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In their analysis of the social phenomenon of group formation and cohesion many sociologists tended to overlook, at one time or another the importance of either the nature of in-group or inter-group relations. As outlined in this thesis some sociological studies assume that one factor or factorial process is the cause or impetus behind group process. On the one hand some sociologists contend that individuals under stress of common deprivation, whether social or biological, facing a common situation or fate or facing an uncertain or insecure situation do gravitate towards one another and interact in a cohesive manner. (Kramer, 1970; Williams, 1957; Wirth, 1964). These studies neglect the fact that there is nothing in peoples' biological make up or in their intrinsic social structure which holds them together or leads them to feel a sense of kinship with each other. This type of analysis lacks an accounting for individual differences or heterogeneity.

On the other hand some sociologists pay only limited attention to the importance of intergroup relations and the impact it has on the formation of in-groups. (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965; Allport, 1958; Banfield, 1970). These scholars deal specifically with the behaviour of the in-group members neglecting the fact that the patterns of behaviour and norms of the in-group are shaped or directed by the nature of the relations between the in-group and the out-group. Every

in-group develops some point of view in relation to the out-group because of necessary contacts. This, without a doubt, has some effect on both individuals' behaviour and also the whole nature of the group. In some cases greater participation and cooperative action and "we-ness" may be felt because of relations with the out-group.

In this thesis I have advanced an analysis of multi causation which gives a comprehensive picture of West Indian group process. In my analysis I have explored and examined the social factors of perception of stereotypes, perception of cultural differences (ethnocentrism), consciousness of kind, and perception of similarities, and investigated their role in group process. I have classified these causal factors broadly into two categories -- the first two termed "external" because they operate primarily outside of the in-group. The net result of this relationship or interaction is polarization or a separation of the West Indian group away from the host society. The second two I have termed "internal" because they operate primarily within the group. The net result of this interaction is cohesion of the group. These "external" and "internal" factors together result in a situation of West Indian group formation and cohesion.

The data presented in this study clearly confirm and support existing sociological approaches. My findings support Cooley's contention that others' reaction to us (perceived or real), and our interpretation of these reactions affect how we relate to them. (1956). My data show that the West Indian students' response to perceived negative stereotyping is withdrawal from the host society. As a

result little interaction and communication exist between the Canadians and West Indians. This was further reinforced by the social distance which resulted.

Shibutani and Kwan's contention that people who perceive certain similarities among themselves tend to interact with each other more so than they would with others who they perceive as different from themselves (1965) is also supported by my findings. More than that this similarity creates a desire in them to associate with people of like kind because of the ease and comfort of doing so, (Allport, 1958). Perceptions of similar historical backgrounds and experience, ways of expressing themselves and similar social situations cause West Indians to seek each other out, resulting in positive interaction. Actual heterogeneity of social backgrounds does not interfere in any significant way with this interaction.

In a word then, while this study does not negate existing conceptualizations or generate new ones regarding group formation and cohesion, it supports and substantiates several of them and places them in a functional relationship with each other in this social process.

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH

This study on West Indian students at McMaster University is one which was done on a small scale, with only a limited sample of students. Hence there are certain obvious limitations to it. Below I outline some of these and suggest areas for other possible related

research.

(1) Data for this study were collected by observing and interviewing a particular group of students at McMaster University, at a particular time. The results therefore may be applicable specifically to this group of students and may not be generalizable to all groups of West Indian students at all times. It would be interesting to look at the kinds of situations that obtain at other universities with respect to West Indian student behaviour to find if any common trends exist. Along with this, since some students stated that university is "an artificial facet of life", in that it does not reflect the true situation as obtains in the community, it might prove worthwhile to investigate these elements as they operate in the community at large. Using a comparative approach one could identify similarities or differences between community and university experience, thereby discovering whether, in fact, university life is "artificial". It is my hypothesis that the university situation is magnified in the community.

(2) Most of the data explain how Canadians are perceived by West Indians. Whether in fact Canadians see West Indians in that light and too, how the former actually see the latter has not been explored. An examination of these areas would give the researcher insight into differences in actual and perceived behaviour. An accounting for the discrepancies which I believe to be inevitable, can be explored by analysing what might be called pre-conceived notions that West Indians might have had before coming to McMaster

or to Canada. To enhance the reliability of such a study it would be worthwhile to observe and interview students as soon as they arrive at McMaster or to Canada and then later once they have engaged in interaction with Canadians. The present study does not take into account any pre-judgements that students may have had before coming to the university.

(3) In analysing group formation as a two phase process no exploration was made of the degree of contribution of either internal or external factors. It was assumed in the "pull"/"push" conceptualization that each factor contributed equally in the process. The extent and difference of contribution to the group process could be examined. One could investigate which factors operate more effectively at what times to create the group situation, and what is the degree of contribution for the individual factors at a particular time or in a particular setting.

(4) The scope of this study does not include an examination of the immigration status of the students. It is my impression that the immigration status of the students might affect their perception and their attitudes about Canada and Canadians. Those students who have landed immigrant visas and who plan to live in Canada for some time might vary slightly in their attitudes in comparison to others who have to return home immediately after they have concluded their studies.

(5) The West Indian students who do not frequent the lounge were not investigated. Whether these students do not identify with

the West Indian group or feel alienated from it, or whether they perceive less or no hostility in the host society is not understood or known. This was beyond the scope of my investigation. A similar type of study may investigate some of these questions.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study represents a departure from the one-sided presentation of some sociologists who study group dynamics. It suggests a comprehensive approach to the study of group formation and cohesion, taking into consideration all the possible causal factors for the phenomenon. This study has set out a two phase "modus operandi" in accounting for West Indian group formation and cohesion. The first phase examines and clarifies a "push" of the group away from the mainstream of society, while the second phase explains a "pull" towards cohesion. In short it provides a more comprehensive analysis of group dynamics. Along with this, the research has not only supported existing theories on group process but it has placed these theoretical findings in a functional relationship with each other.

In presenting data on perception of hostility and subsequent reaction to it, this study makes one aware of the kinds of problems and difficulties that foreign students perceive in their relationship with the host society. It also outlines the kind of action they take in response to the situation. This study explains how students under 'stress' have been able to function adequately through interaction with other students in similar straits.



Another significant feature of this study is its potential for bridging the social gap that presently exists between foreign students and the host society. Since the research explains the kinds of feelings West Indians have about the way Canadians think and act it could possibly help Canadians to understand West Indian behaviour. The study can also be viewed in the manner of providing guidelines for the host society in their interaction with foreign students. Whether these findings can be generalized to include other "separate" groups on campus is not presently ascertainable. However it certainly provides guidelines for West Indian/Canadian interaction. Bridging the gap between these two groups may thus foster positive interaction between them, thus narrowing the social distance which now exists and which now only serves to re-inforce the existing situation of misunderstanding.

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