

A COMPARISON OF HAWAIIAN AND MAINLAND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE NEGRO

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INTRODUCTION:

Newcomers to Hawaii are known to marvel at the local climate, beaches, foliage, and shops. They also find themselves surprised to find no apparent signs of racial prejudice, segregation, or discrimination. Long-time residents of the Islands tend to take the scenic wonders for granted and to accept the racial attitudes as the ultimate in non-prejudicial living. However, people with more awareness recognize that Hawaii, whatever its scenic and tourist attractions, falls far short of being non-prejudiced.

Because of the great pride taken by Hawaii's residents when speaking of their home and because of the grotesque stories which come from Mainland newspapers and other communication sources, Hawaii is often touted as being a racial paradise. Some local people gloss over the few published incidents which indicate racial prejudice and ignore the day-to-day signs of prejudice.

The attitudes of local people towards the various racial groups which constitute its population have been a frequent subject of research, some of it published, much of it remaining unpublished. One racial group, the American Negro, however, has not been the subject of very much research, although Mainland Negroes have been the focus of literally volumes of psychological and sociological research.

There are several probable reasons for this lack of interest in the local Negro population, the main one likely being the relatively small number of local Negro inhabitants. Another possible factor is that land of familial origin is often more important in indicating "in-group" background than is color or race in the anthropological sense.

Lloyd Lee¹ published an account of the Negro status in Hawaii as it existed shortly after World War II, and this seems to remain a definitive work, in spite of subsequent alterations in attitudes and living conditions of local negroes.

Historically, as Lee points out, the Negroes did play a definite role in the development of Hawaii, although records are sparse and confused. Contemporaneously, the Negro has appeared to fit well into the local society and has received a minimum of discrimination in terms of housing, service, employment, etc. According to one prominent member of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the organization was disbanded due, largely, to lack of a felt need on the part of the local population; a more recent movement to gather together Negroes has met with most response from newcomers to the Islands and has been largely ignored by the older and more permanent residents.

Research on attitudes towards the Negro has shown that, although the Negro is better accepted in Hawaii than he is on the Mainland, this race is

¹ Lee, Lloyd L., Brief Analysis of the Role and Status of the Negro in the Community, Amer. Soc. Rev XIII (1948) p. 419-437, A Master's Thesis.

still "low man on the local racial totem pole" and out-marriages to American Negroes are more frowned upon than out-marriages to any other local racial group.²

Since the magazines, movies, and other information-communication media are largely the same in Hawaii as on the Mainland, it also appears that many of the common stereotypes concerning the Negroes are as prevalent in Hawaii as on the Mainland, although less so. It is important to realize, however, that the kamaaina Negroes in Hawaii are not always lumped with the more recent residents regarding these stereotypes. They are accepted as "local" and little is made of their Negro affiliation. Frequently, in a fashion similar to that discussed by Drake and Cayton, 3 members of this latter look upon any problems concerning Negroes recently arrived as affecting them via the 'guilt by association' channel and resent the intrusion of the newcomers as a force possibly disturbing their already-achieved integration into Island life.

In addition to communication media, another possible--and as yet unmeasured--source of racial discrimination comes as a result of tourists from Southern states preferring not to be accommodated in hotels which are open to the colored races. This has occurred in other tourist areas of North America and there is no reason to believe that Hawaii will remain immune.

PURPOSE:

It seemed of interest in connection with the local Negro situation (the word 'problem' is consciously avoided, since no particular 'problem' exists at present) to learn of the relative regard accorded the Negro by comparable local and Mainland non-Negro groups. This would be a beginning in the scientific understanding of differences between Hawaiian and Mainland attitudes towards the Negro, thus placing the local feeling in some perspective. At the same time, it would give an indication of what local feeling is in general.

INSTRUMENT:

To this end, an attitude scale of feelings regarding the Negro has been administered to two local groups of college students and one Mainland group. (See below for explanation of groups.)

The scale consists of twenty-one items concerning the feelings of the testee to Negroes. The test is merely a series of statements to which the respondent is to reply in terms of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "?," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." (A twenty-third item was dropped in the final tabulation due to conclusion of interpretation.) Of the twenty-two statements, ten were so stated that the response "Strongly Disagree" would indicate higher acceptance of the Negro; twelve, that "Strongly Agree" would show greater acceptance.

The scale was originally constructed for use with Mainland university students and did not always specify "Negro," but frequently referred to "colored." Because of the numerous non-Negro residents of Hawaii who

² Dole, Arthur, unpublished research.

³ Drake, St. C. & Horace R. Cayton, Black Metropolis (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1945).

might be considered "colored," the form was changed to specify Negroes in each case when administered in Hawaii.

A final question on the original form asked the percentage of Americans the respondent considered "racially prejudiced;" for Hawaiian administration, this was re-worded to read "percentage of people in this country who are prejudiced against Negroes." The basis of this item was the evidence that showed that people who are prejudiced themselves tend to endow a greater percentage of the general population with prejudice.

Since no available attitude form was considered adequate for the task involved, the author constructed a new form. A large number of the items on this form were culled from previous forms, including the scale constructed by Hinckley,⁴ the scale used in the Authoritarian Personality,⁵ and the social distance scale originated by Bogardus.⁶ Some items went into the new scale in altered form, some were retained exactly as on the original scales, and some items were completely new. A modification of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale was included and accounted for eight of the items on the final scale.

All items were obvious as to intent, and faking could easily have been accomplished, although there was no obvious motivation to do so, other than the self-concept of the respondent. This form will be referred to as the Scale of Attitudes to the Negro (SAN).

SUBJECTS:

Since this research was part of a larger project, the subjects were picked largely by accident. The college student remains, unfortunately, the most readily available 'captive' subject, and was, thus, used in this research.

Mainland subjects were fifty white students in an elementary psychology class at a large private and secular midwestern university. These students were nearly all freshmen or sophomores; most of them resided in an urban industrial city, many living in the suburban areas. There were numerous Negro students at the university, and it is probable that every student in the class had had at least two or three classes with Negroes, perhaps lived in the same dormitory with Negroes, and ate at the same cafeteria with Negroes.

These students were asked to sign their names to the form before handing it in, which should have accentuated their desires to fake their responses, especially since the class instructor was known to be extremely liberal racially.

One local group of students consisted of fifty students in a class in elementary sociology at the University of Hawaii. These students were also nearly all freshmen and sophomores; it is likely that sixty percent resided

⁴ Hinckley, E. D., "The Influence of Individual Opinion on Construction of an Attitude Scale," *Journal of Social Psychology*, III (1932), p. 283-295.

⁵ Adorno, T. W., et al, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harpers, 1950).

⁶ Bogardus, in Newcomb & Hartley, *Readings in Social Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1947), p. 503-507.

in Honolulu or its suburbs. They did not place their names on their papers, except in a few instances by accident.

The second local group of students consisted of forty students in an advanced class in psychology at the University of Hawaii. These students were nearly all juniors or seniors and graduate students; again, it is probable that sixty percent lived in Honolulu. About one quarter of these students placed their names on their papers.

None of the students in any of the groups were aware of the purposes of the research nor were any aware that the results would be published. All the forms were administered in class as part of the class program; in all cases, questions pertaining to the nature of the form were deferred until after completion.

SCORING:

A response showing strong agreement with the non-prejudiced point of view was scored as 'five' points; general agreement was scored as '4' points; a question mark was scored as '3' points; and disagreement and strong disagreement were scored as '2' points and '1' point respectively. This gave a possible range of from twenty-two to one-hundred-ten points. The actual range, of course, was much more restricted.

RESULTS:

The comparable scores of the three groups can best be seen by reference to Figure 1, expressed in terms of percentages. It is apparent that the two Hawaiian groups scored as being much less prejudiced than the Mainland group. It is also interesting to note that the more advanced students at the University of Hawaii were consistently less prejudiced than were the freshmen and sophomore students.

Regarding the twenty-third item that relating to the number as prejudiced people in the country, again the two Hawaiian groups assume much less prejudice than does the Mainland group, although there is no difference between the local groups in this case. Since the number of Mainland students in each of the Hawaii groups is unknown, the effects of these students on the group totals is impossible to determine. (See Figure 2)

The raw data show that one half of the Mainland group received a raw score of 84 or below, as compared with one third of the younger Hawaii students and one fourth of the older Hawaii students; two-thirds of the Mainland freshmen and sophomores scored as more prejudiced than one-half of their Hawaiian counterparts; fully one-third of the Mainland students registered a raw score of 75 or below, while less than five percent of the two Hawaiian groups were that prejudiced.

DISCUSSION:

For purposes of interpreting the results, it is necessary to remember the possibility of faking, even though there was no perceived sign that such was done. It is also necessary to realize that many of the Hawaiian students have had little contact with Negroes, that the heroes of both football and basketball are Negroes, and that the tradition in Hawaii is such that prejudices, even if felt, are not expected to be shown.

This last is a most important commentary, since it could conceivably have been the only real difference between the local and Mainland groups.

It is completely possible that exactly the same prejudices do exist, but that local students, with a tradition for non-prejudice, will not admit their feelings even on unsigned forms. It must also be pointed out again that the request that the Mainland students place their names on their papers might have partially compensated for Hawaiian prejudice against prejudice. However, with these considerations understood, it becomes necessary to analyze the data on their own merits and assume that they give a true picture of relative feelings.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from the data in Figure 1 is that local students are considerably more liberal regarding the American Negro than are Mainland university students. This might be a result of the fact that Negroes do not provide an economic or political threat in Hawaii; it might be due to the small number of local Negroes; it could conceivably be a function of the extensive mingling of races that occurs in Hawaii; another hypothesis is that the psychological climate in Hawaii is such that racial prejudice does not exist as much as on the Mainland; it could be that the local people, being of minority groups themselves, have more positive feeling to other minority groups; or it could be a combination of these and many more factors.

On the other hand, it would be foolish to ignore the fact that numerous local students did indicate a certain amount of prejudice, a situation to be expected in a real community, but one that prevents our acceptance of Hawaii as racial utopia.

In evaluating the results of the final item, it is interesting to note that, in accordance with the theory which led to the inclusion of this question, the Hawaiians do recognize much less prejudice than do the Mainland students. This would be consistent with the idea that the Hawaiians are less prejudiced.

One flaw, however, mars this argument. A correlation performed between "percentage prejudiced against the Negro" (answer to last question) and total raw score on the SAN for the group of Hawaii elementary sociology students (N=50) was found to be positive (.15) although low. This shows that, at least within this one group, the less prejudiced individuals (those having higher raw scores) perceived a higher proportion of the country as prejudiced, a result in direct variance with previous research. Although the sample here is too limited to be used as a basis for refuting previously acknowledged research, it undoubtedly places it under question.

Therefore, in order to understand the differences between Mainland and Hawaii students in their recognition of prejudice, it is necessary to turn to another hypothesis. A very likely one is that the local students, not having had much personal contact with prejudice or personal feelings of prejudice, do not realize the extent of prejudice that prevails; the least-prejudiced of the local students may be more aware of reality and the several studies of racial prejudice in the United States and this caused them to give the higher estimate.

SUMMARY:

Research was carried on to determine the relative feelings towards Negroes of local and Mainland university students. A new attitude scale was devised for this purpose. Local students, according to the scale, showed less anti-Negro feeling than did Mainland students.

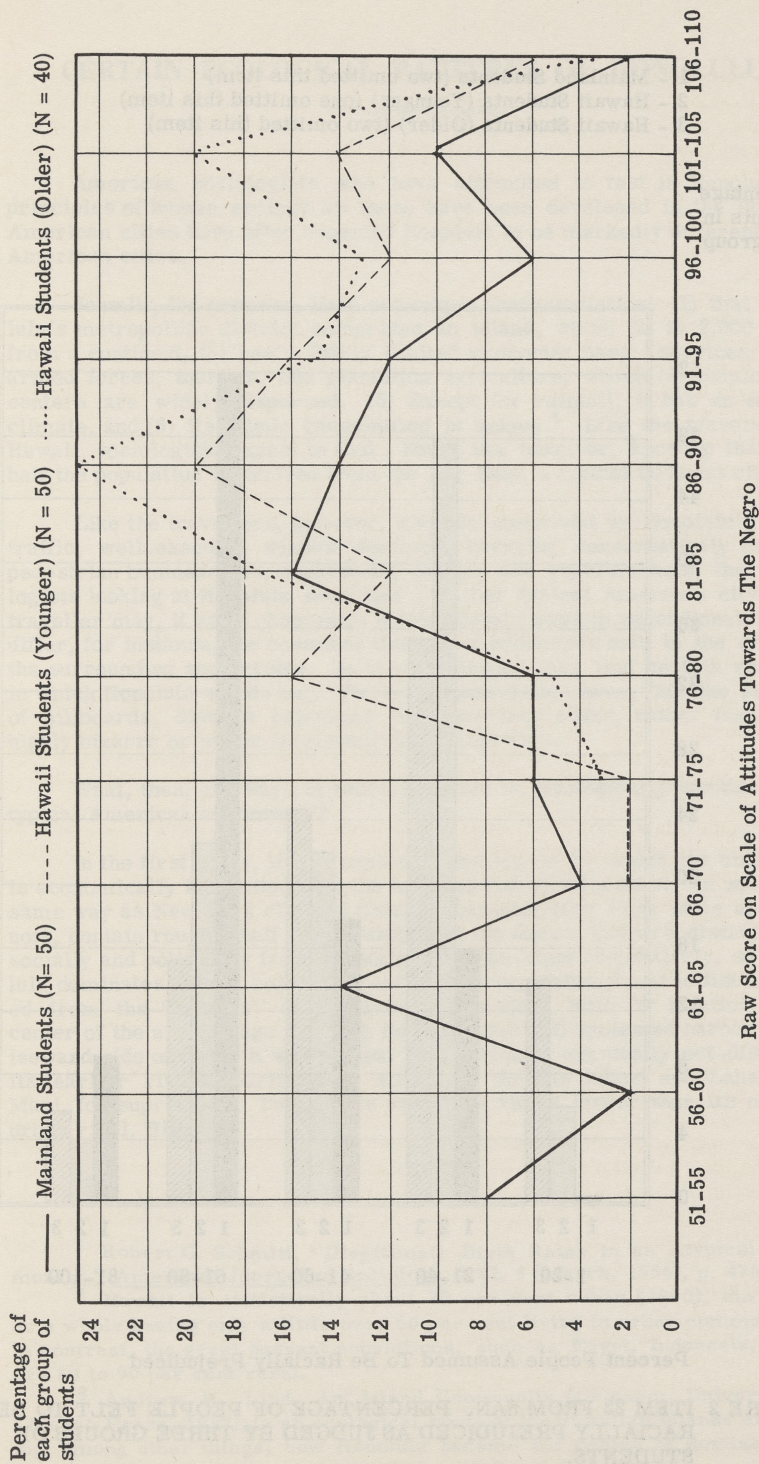
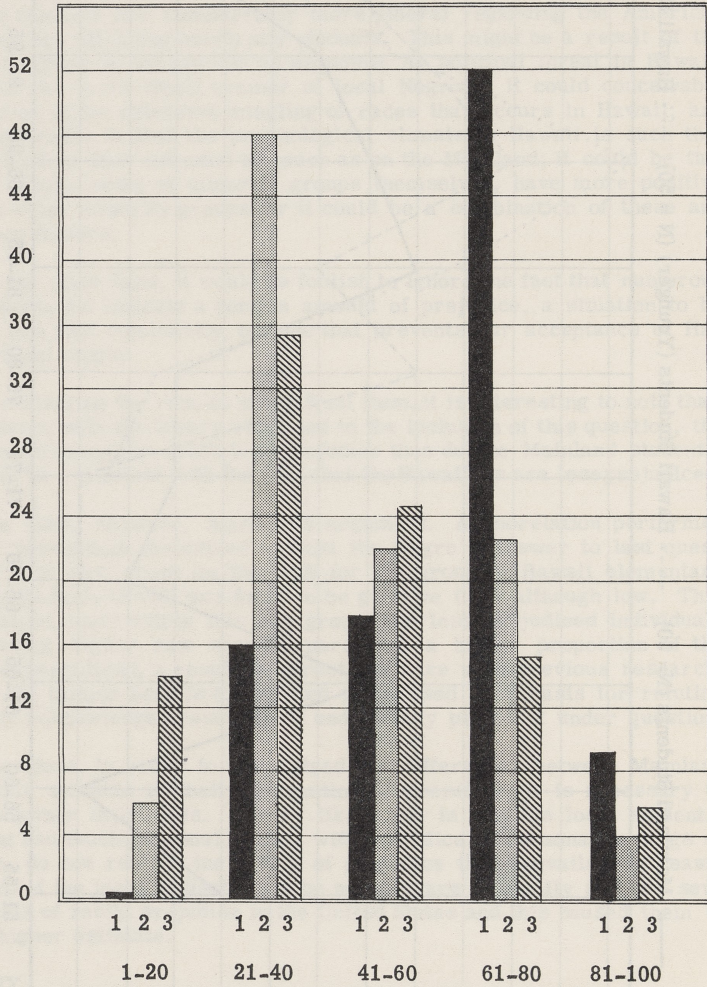


FIGURE 1 - PERCENTAGE OF EACH STUDENT GROUP OBTAINING INDICATED RAW SCORE ON PREJUDICE TEST.
HIGH SCORE INDICATES LOW PREJUDICE.

- 1 - Mainland Students (two omitted this item)
- 2 - Hawaii Students (Younger) (one omitted this item)
- 3 - Hawaii Students (Older) (two omitted this item)

Percentage students in each group



Percent People Assumed To Be Racially Prejudiced

FIGURE 2 ITEM 23 FROM SAN. PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE FELT TO BE RACIALLY PREJUDICED AS JUDGED BY THREE GROUPS OF STUDENTS.