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Project No.: 9811 _____

Contract No.: _____

Task Order No.: _____

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A NOTE ON BLACK AND WHITE ATTITUDES IN 1960

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March 18, 1970

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During our work on the Philippines we acquired a large body of data on political and social attitudes in five countries including the United States.¹ In general the United States ranked high on "desirable" criteria for an open democratic society. For example, most Americans in 1960 felt that the government had a positive impact on their lives and most expected equal treatment from officials. Strong differences among subgroups, however, are often masked by the reporting of aggregates.² In the case of the United States sample, the black-white proportions were almost exactly those found in the population as a whole, 100 blacks in a total sample of 966. If the views of the blacks were less favorable, they were overwhelmed in the aggregates by the views of the white majority.

This document presents some of the major differences in black-white attitudes toward the American social system about 1960. It also presents some of the differences in life style and in philosophy of life. At that time blacks saw life in much darker tones than the white population and their personal concerns ran in quite different directions.³ In 1960 overt active social protest by the blacks was just beginning to gain strength. So it is important both for substantive and methodological reasons to see if differences in attitudes show up. It is also important to trace these attitudes through time and relate them to structural changes in black-white relations.^{4,5} The ups and downs of black and white attitudes do provide one relatively direct way of checking policy performance -- at least as perceived.

¹The so-called Civic Culture tapes. See G. A. Almond and S. Verba, The Civic Culture, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1963.

²Characteristically, national polls such as Gallup or Harris report attitudes of the nation as a whole.

³More recent survey data suggest this situation may have changed.

⁴Black-white attitudes can serve as an important "social indicator." For a discussion of the social indicator problem see R. A. Bower, ed., Social Indicators, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1966.

⁵This kind of analysis is part of Rand's "Three Cities" study proposal. See R. Levine, et al., Population Determinants of Urban Problems: A Framework for Policy, January 1970.

Survey data -- derived from proper procedures -- are as "hard" as the economic indicators often used to check the progress of the races. The problem comes in making inferences from attitudinal data, since the social theory we have is a lot weaker than the economic theory. Nevertheless, the counterpoint between attitudinal "indicators" and economic "indicators" can be illuminating. As data become available for the period 1960-1970 -- and an enormous quantity exists -- we plan to produce this kind of counterpoint. We also plan to go as far back in time as data permit.

Consider then perceptions of the national government. Tables 1 and 2 show black-white perceptions of impact of government on daily life. Blacks apparently perceived less impact on the national government. A lower proportion perceived a positive impact.¹

These general perceptions parallel specific ones concerning the behavior of government and the police. These are shown in Tables 3 and 4. In 1960 only 50 percent of the blacks felt they could get equal treatment from government compared to 87 percent of the whites. Striking differences again emerge in views about the behavior of the police. Sixty percent of the blacks at that time felt they would get equal treatment compared to 88 percent of the whites.

Tables 5 and 6 show a more detailed breakdown on the interactions between citizens and police. Large fractions of both blacks and whites felt their views did not get serious consideration from government officials. Again large differences emerge between blacks and whites on the issue with very low fractions of blacks feeling their views get serious consideration.

How would these two groups go about changing this situation? Table 7 shows the methods each group believes most effective in influencing government decisions. Whites in general preferred organized methods. Sixty-three percent of the whites would form groups or work

¹Roughly the same result held when respondents were asked questions concerning the impact of local government.

Table 1
EFFECT OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ON DAILY LIFE
(percent)

	Black	White
Great	25	43
Some	55	42
None	11	11
Don't know	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 2
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IMPROVES CONDITIONS
(percent)

	Black	White
Improves	62	75
Sometimes improves	27	17
Sometimes not		
Better off without	3	3
No difference	1	1
Don't know	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 3
OBTAIN EQUAL TREATMENT FROM GOVERNMENT
(percent)

	Black	White
Yes	49	87
Depends	6	3
No	30	7
Don't know	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 4
OBTAIN EQUAL TREATMENT FROM POLICE
(percent)

	Black	White
Yes	60	88
Depends	6	3
No	■30	7
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 5
OFFICIALS CONSIDER YOUR VIEWS
(percent)

	Black	White
Serious consideration	30	50
Little attention	35	31
Ignore	10	5
Depends	8	12
Other	1	0
Don't know	<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 6
POLICE CONSIDER YOUR VIEW
(percent)

	Black	White
Serious consideration	36	58
Little attention	33	20
Ignore	21	10
Depends	4	9
Won't say	0	.5
Other	0	.1
Don't know	<u>6</u>	<u>2.4</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 7

MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF
INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT DECISIONS
(percent)

	Black	White
None	3	0
Work through personal and family connections	9	6
Write to government officials	35	24
Get people interested - form group	28	38
Work through political party	9	25
Organize protest demonstration	6	3
Other	0	0
Don't know	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

through political parties compared to 37 percent of the blacks. Thirty-five percent of the blacks preferred to write government officials compared to 24 percent of the whites. Both groups felt that protest demonstrations were not an effective means of influencing decisions.¹

Tables 8 and 9 suggest the difference in methods of influencing the government may be related to general perceptions of life. If no one cares what happens to you and if human nature is not cooperative, then it seems difficult for organized political action to occur. But in the 1960s there was much organized action by blacks. Changes in attitude and behavior need to be linked to the changes in political environment that occurred during the Kennedy-Johnson years.

¹Again it would be valuable to trace the perceived relative worth of protest demonstrations across time.

Table 8
NO ONE CARES WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU
(percent)

	Black	White
Agree	64	35
Disagree	34	62
Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866

Table 9
HUMAN NATURE FUNDAMENTALLY COOPERATIVE
(percent)

	Black	White
Agree	69	81
Disagree	17	13
Don't know	12	5
No answer	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100
SS	100	866