Values and beliefs of Indo-Guyanese:
An assessment of the assimilation hypothesis

Preethy S. Samuel, PhD
Research Associate, Wayne State University, Michigan, USA

268 Leonard Simmons Bldg,
4809 Woodward Ave,
Detroit, MI 48202

&

Leon C. Wilson, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
Wayne State University, Michigan, USA

2233 Faculty/Administration Building,
656 W. Kirby St. 2228 F/AB
Detroit, MI 48202
Values and beliefs of Indo-Guyanese
An assessment of the assimilation hypothesis

ABSTRACT

Despite acknowledgments of pluralism, Caribbean family researchers often focus on the Afro-Caribbean families and do not satisfactorily address the issues of the Indo-Caribbean people, who have been living in the region for well over a century. It is unclear from extant literature whether people of Indian origin in the Caribbean have remained ethnically separate or have blended into the dominant Creole culture of the Caribbean. This paper examines whether the Indo-Guyanese differ from the other Guyanese in their attitudes on marriage and views on exogamy. Findings from secondary analysis of cross-sectional data of Guyana collected in 2004, suggest that the Indo-Guyanese are distinct in their values and beliefs from the other Guyanese. The most common reason for marriage and benefit from marriage for the Indo-Guyanese is utilitarian rather than romantic, when compared to the other Guyanese. The Indo-Guyanese hold more conservative views on importance of marriage and views exogamy, but there were clear gender differences as well irrespective of ethnic affiliation. These attitudinal differences about marriage suggest that some of the Indo-Guyanese values are different from that of the dominant Creole culture, which may be attributed to their cultural traits. Hence the concept “Guyanization” appears to be an ongoing process rather than a completed phenomenon, at least in the familial domain of the Indo-Guyanese.
Introduction
The Indian diaspora had a diverse pattern and it is estimated that nearly 20 million people of Indian origin are spread over several countries of Africa, South East Asia, Middle-East, Caribbean, North America and the Pacific Islands. Early Indian emigration (19th century) was due to the demand for cheap labor following the Emancipation Act. In the latter half of the 20th century, however, Indian professionals emigrated to the developed countries of the West. Simultaneously, during the oil boom of the 1970’s there was also an outflow of India’s skilled and semi-skilled laborers to West Asia and the Gulf countries. Early views of Indian emigrants all over the world were that they have retained their cultural identity to a large extent, despite the diverse reasons and process of immigration (Jayawardena, 1968).

Nearly 500,000 South Asian Indians were brought to the Caribbean as indentured laborers nearly 150 years ago, following the abolishment of slavery. Currently people of Indian origin are a numerical minority in the Caribbean, with the exception of Guyana where they comprise 51% of the population. They can be found in all walks of the ‘Creole’ [Caribbean] way of life, yet they are regarded as culturally distinct (Cross, 1980). Dominant in the Caribbean are African descendants who arrived in the Caribbean centuries ago as slave workers and are believed to have adopted more aspects of the British-European Caribbean culture than the Indo-Caribbeans. Indo-Guyanese are assumed to have retained significant aspects of their cultural heritage, especially where they are the majority population (Jayawardena, 1968; Samuel 2006).

Guyanese context
Caribbean refers to a heterogeneous group of islands (Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad & Tobago) situated in the Caribbean Sea from the north coast of Venezuela in South America to the south coast of
Florida, USA. Early views of these countries suggest complex societies, dependent and fragmented cultures, dependent economies and peculiar political development. (Smith, 1963). All of these countries have emerged as independent nations and experience usual challenges of developing nations to varying degrees, The largest concentration of persons of Indian origin are in Guyana (43.5%), Trinidad (41%) and Surinam (35%) while they comprise below 5% of the population of Jamaica, Guadeloupe, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Grenada (Bureau of Statistics, 2002; CIA World Fact Book, 2002).

Guyana received the maximum number of indentured laborers (about 240,000) from Colonial India from 1838-1917. Although indentureship was abolished by 1917 only 32% returned to India (Trotz & Peake, 2000), and in the 1911 census, persons of Indian origin emerged as an ethnic majority. The Indian population in Guyana rose steadily: constituting 42% of the population in 1921, 48%, in 1960, and in 1990 they comprised nearly 51% of the population (Seenarine, 1996; CIA world fact book, Merrill, 1992). According to the latest census data (Bureau of Statistics, 2002), Guyana is ethnically diverse, consisting of Amerindians (9.2%), Indo-Guyanese (43.5%), Afro-Guyanese (30.2%), Mixed-Guyanese (16.7%), Whites (0.06%), Portuguese (0.2%) and the Chinese (0.19%). Guyana, since its independence in 1966, has been promoting a sense of nationhood despite it racial and cultural plurality as reflected by its official motto "One People, One Nation, One Destiny". The implicit tension between this process of unification which is termed “Guyanization.” and plurality is of interest in itself. Of particular interest in this study is the issue of cultural assimilation and whether it occurs at the personal (individual and group) level or merely at the political level.

The majority of the Indo-Caribbean laborers: poor low-caste Hindu peasants from Northern India; were prized for their docile nature by the plantation owners who despised the former African slaves for the same reason (Cross, 1980; Smith, 1959). By the early
1900s the Indians were dominant in rice production and small trade while the Afro-Guyanese were largely urban workers or miners. A common assumption is that the Indian in Guyana is a rurally based agricultural laborer in the rice or sugar industry. Yet, there are few urban areas where Guyanese of Indian origin cannot be found. Based on census data it is estimated that 21% of the urban population was Indian in 1980 which increased to 28% since 1990 (Population census of the Caribbean, 2002).

Extant literature does not provide clarity on whether people of Indian origin have remained ethnically separate or have blended into the dominant Creole culture of the Caribbean. Some scholars have observed cultural continuity (Klass, 1961; Niehoff & Niehoff, 1960; Rauf, 1972), while others argue for acculturation through the phenomenon of Creolization (Angrosino, 1976; Nevadosky, 1980; Smith & Jayawardena, 1959). Limited empirical data on Indians living in the Caribbean make it difficult to make precise predictions about the nature of their family patterns. While there is evidence that there are significant differences in the structural arrangements of the Indo-Guyanese marriage and family (Samuel & Wilson, in press), it is not clear if there are significant attitudinal differences among the ethnic groups. Hence the objective of this paper is to quantitatively examine if the Indo-Guyanese differ from the other ethnic groups in their attitudes towards marriage. The research questions that will be addressed in this paper are: Do the Indo-Guyanese differ from the Afro-Guyanese in their perceptions of the importance of marriage, reasons for marriage, and their views on exogamy?

Theories of Assimilation

The process of forming new identities and negotiating cultural backgrounds has been studied extensively, in order to understand how diverse people live together in relative harmony. The theories of assimilation and cultural pluralism are briefly
discussed to describe the patterns of adjustment of the Indo-Caribbean people, before empirically examining the influence of these theories in the realm of their familial values and beliefs.

Assimilation includes the stages of behavioral assimilation (acculturation), structural assimilation (social assimilation) and marital assimilation (Gordon, 1964). In the stage of acculturation, the minority group members adopt the cultural patterns of the majority group, such as acquiring language skills, dressing styles, and outward emotional etiquette, but internal cultural traits (religious affiliation and musical taste) are usually not changed. Structural assimilation is the entry of the minority group into primary group relationships with the majority group. Inter-ethnic marriage is one of the evidences that assimilation is occurring in a society both at the individual and group level (Marcson, 1950-51). Although Gordon’s theory has been criticized extensively, it does indicate that there is a continuum through which individuals pass, beginning with acculturation and ending with complete assimilation (Thompson, 1996 p. 113).

According to Gordon (1964) cultural pluralism cannot occur without the existence of separate sub-societies. Sub-societies continue to exist even as their cultural differences are progressively decreasing. According to some scholars cultural pluralism operates among the Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians (Bell, 1970; Munasinghe, 2001), as there appears to be a two-way mechanism of negative indifference between them as where members of both ethnic groups view each others’ traits with sarcasm, antipathy mistrust and hostility (Bell, 1970). Although there is no large-scale conflict among them there is a pervasive state of mind that Oxxal in 1968 termed plural dissociation (ibid.). Plural dissociation is characterized by the attitude that each one should mind his own affairs, without interfering into the business of other groups.
The plural experience has been metaphorically described by Munasinghe (2001) as the salad-bowl experience, in her discussion of the negotiation of Indo-Trinidadian identity. Varied cultural groups co-exist but yet maintain their unique identities and social institutions similar to a salad, whose essence is variety. In summary, it appears that the Indo-Caribbean people are living in ethnically plural sub-societies, while the process of assimilation is ongoing.

**Indian marriage**

Marriage is a key institution in the Indian subculture in the Caribbean and the ritual ceremony is a symbol of status and identity in society. Marriage is considered essential for virtually everyone, and is viewed as the pathway to adulthood. This transition to adulthood is often not the result of individual efforts as arranging a marriage is a critical responsibility of parents and older relatives in the family. A Hindu Indian man is considered an adult only when he enters the stage of family life through marriage while an unmarried girl over 20 years is an object of curiosity and shame to her parents for failing in their duty of finding her a husband (Smith & Jayawardena, 1959).

The arranged marriage is still prevalent in the Indian culture and is expected even among the educated middle class of urban India (Agarwal, 1991; Medora, Larson & Dave 2000). Marriages in India are usually arranged by parents with varying degrees of choice given to the young couple entering the relationship. Hindu society considers marriage to be a union of families and the continuation of the paternal family line (Hoelter, Axinn & Ghimire, 2004). In the Caribbean, the notion of choice gradually entered the institution of marriage in the 1960s when the prospective bride and groom were allowed to see each other prior to marriage and to decide whether they agreed with their parental choice (Mohammed, 2002; Munasinghe, 2001). The most gradual and nuanced shift in the institution of marriage was the shift from the notion of love as
respect for husband and parents and commitments to one’s parents’ choice, to romantic love as practiced in dominant Afro-Caribbean culture (Mohammed, 2002).

**Types of Caribbean Conjugal Unions**

The three common forms of conjugal unions in the Caribbean are visiting unions, common law unions and married unions (Iffil, 2003; Roopnarine, 1997). Visiting or keeper unions are the most unstable type and are usually characterized by only one partner with no commitments from the man, who merely visits for sexual gratification (Roberts, 1955, Barrow, 1999). The relationship is transitory in nature but may lead to marriage or common-law unions, often resulting in the formation of female-headed households (Manyoni, 1980). Common-law unions tends to be more permanent than visiting unions, although not legally recognized in the post slavery era, it is currently protected by law and usually requires the sharing of a home and resources for the upkeep of the family (Manyoni, 1980).

Visiting and common-law unions occur most often among low-income Afro-Caribbean families (Barrow, 1999 & Munasinghe, 2001). According to Sharma (1986) the lower castes of Indians had an acceptable practice named *Baithana* which was comparable to common-law union. Overall Indians were critical of the principle of common-law and visiting unions, but they were found to be tolerant of such forms of the family in practice, as evidenced by Munasinghe’s study of the village of Cambio in Trinidad (2001). In 1962, Roberts and Braithwaite found that Indian women in the Caribbean marry more and have fewer common-law unions when compared to the Afro-Guyanese women (Schlesinger, 1968). Common-law unions among Indians were more stable and more likely to continue than for the non-Indian women (Ibid.).

Smith and Jayawardena identified four main types of Indo-Caribbean marriages in a study of three rural communities of Guyana: Customary marriage, Legal marriage, Customary and Legal marriage and Common-law marriage (Schlesinger, 1968). A
customary marriage is a religious ritual that is not registered under the law is, while both the legal and religious requirements are fulfilled in the third kind. The marriage ceremony is one of the most important religious ceremonies and yet it is creolized in many respects (Barrow, 1986). Wedding dates are chosen on the basis of convenience and are not based on the horoscope. Weddings are not restricted to particular ‘good’ days of the year and it is not uncommon to witness Sunday weddings, which is rare under the traditional system. The ban on alcohol in religious ceremony is relaxed to the extent that the visitors can bring alcohol, but it is still not served by the host (Barrow, 1999). The cultural continuity in marriage is most evident in the persistence of the Bhojpuri rituals in conducting the Hindu marriage ceremony (Smith, 1986).

**Views on exogamy**

Interracial unions are fairly common in the Caribbean, which consists of racially and ethnically diverse people groups. Among the people of Indian origin in the Caribbean, interracial marriages are more common in places like Jamaica, where they comprise a numerical minority (Sharma, 1986). Nearly 20 years ago it was found that there was a high level of tolerance of inter-racial marriages among the urban-Guyanese (Matthews & Wilson, 1999). Intermarriage is supposed to help mediate between the seemingly well-defined racial groups of the Caribbean (Birth, 1997). Nonetheless, biracial groups have their own set of identity issues. “Dougla” refers to the Caribbean offspring that result from the intermarriage between those of African and Indian decent (Rampersad, 1998). The word Dougla is a word of Persian decent (Doglā) which means “not of pure blood or breed”, and is often interpreted by many Trinidadians to be the Hindi word for bastard (Munasinghe, 2001, p. xi).

Extant literature offers varied reasons for why the Indian men chose not to marry the locally available women of African descent, despite the high-sex ratio during the period of indenture. It must also be noted that many of the Indian men were married and
had not brought their wives with them by choice as they intended to return to India (Neihoff & Neihoff, 1960). The Indian Hindus were supposed to have associated the dark skinned people of African descent with the dark-skinned demon named Ravan- an evil character from the tales of Ramayana, a holy Hindu book. The Aryan Hindus took great pride in being light-skinned and hence looked down on dark-skinned people and viewed them as ‘polluted untouchables’ (Birth, 1997; Neihoff & Neihoff, 1960). Another reason is that the Indian laborers were physically separated from the ex-African slaves who had moved to urban areas, as they were restricted to the plantations by the plantation owners (Neihoff & Neihoff, 1960). The unwillingness of Indian males to marry the women of African descent coupled by the scarcity of Indian females in the Caribbean led to a gendered social problem where the men tried to do their best to preserve the institution of marriage, at the expense of abusing the Indian women in various ways (Sharma, 1986).

The Indians are believed to have striven to retain their cultural uniqueness, by preventing miscegenation (Mohammed, 2002; Trotz & Peake, 2000). According to Mohammed (2002) in 1911, the proportion of Indian Creoles in Trinidad was 1.47 per 100 unmixed Indians, which increased to 1.87 in 1921 and to 4.29 in 1946. The proportion was higher for other racial groups and also among the urban Indians. For example, in the Port of Spain, the proportion of Chinese creoles and Indian Creoles was 65.11 and 21.37 respectively. In interracial relationships, the long standing patrification and Creole matrification patterns tend to influence the development patterns of offspring. According to Birth (1997) a child of an Indian father and a Creole mother is usually encouraged to maintain ties with both racial groups. But when the mother is Indian and the father is Creole, the child is often unable to maintain ties with the mother’s family, as the Indian community does not accept the relationship whole-heartedly. Other migrant groups view this resistance to intermarriage negatively. According to the other migrant
groups the Indo-Trinidadians glorify their own traditional culture and dwell in the past instead of welcoming the western ways of life (Mohammed, 2002).

Creole women tend to reject Indian men as potential spouses, as they were stereotyped to be violent due to the incidents of wife-murder during indentureship (Sharma, 1986). The Indian stereotype of being “stingy, unsociable and inclined to avoid social obligations in pursuit of wealth” also deterred Creoles from marrying Indians, in addition to the historical view that they increased the competition for work (Birth, 1997, p. 590).

Indians preferred an inter-religious marriage among themselves over an inter-racial marriage. For example, a marriage between a Hindu and a Christian Indian was more acceptable than an Indian marrying a person of a different race, irrespective of religious affiliation. There were also preferences for inter-religious marriages among people of Indian origin such as; a Hindu-Christian union was preferred over a Hindu-Muslim union, because the Hindus considered Christians as “till-yesterday-Hindus” (Sharma, 1986: p. 33). Unions between Indian women and African men were disapproved especially by the Indian men, while both ethnic groups preferred a proximity to whiteness rather than blackness (Mohammed, 2002). According to Nevadomsky in 1983, intermarriages between Indians and Chinese, Whites or Spanish carry no stigma, while black-Indian marriages are considered debasing, especially if the female is Indian (Birth, 1997).

A study done in a Hindu Trinidadian village in 1964 revealed that exogamy was more common than endogamy by caste., as less than half (45%) of the marriages were found to be endogamous by caste. The caste system was one of the first cultural

---

1 The Hindu-Muslim antagonism prevalent among the present day Indo-Guyanese was brought over as socio-cultural baggage from their motherland.

2 One of the effects of assimilation was the conversion of the Hindus to Christianity and hence the Christians were viewed as “till yesterday Hindus”. The Hindus preferred to enter marital alliances with these newly Christians rather than Muslim Indo-Guyanese.
characteristics to be lost during indenture (Barrow, 1999; Cross 1980), but it did reappear to a certain extent following cultural revival and population growth. With the effects of Creolization and free choice of partners, one would expect that endogamy by race and religion would also decrease, but Indians still exhibit a strong preference to marry other Indians with similar religious background (Barrow, 1999). Village exogamy is preferred by the Indo-Caribbeans, and girls are usually given in marriage to boys who live in other villages as it prevents marrying among close kin, increases choice of suitors, and strengthens kinship ties between villages. On rare occasions the family seeks for potential spouses from their mother country, India as well, but given the distance this is usually rare (Schlesinger, 1968).

In summary, the above review suggests that the Indo-Guyanese attitudes towards marriage are closer to the Eastern culture, rather than that of the Anglophone Caribbean. Literature suggests that marriage is a key Indian institution and is preferred over the other types of conjugal unions in the Caribbean. In this paper we provide an empirical assessment of the attitudinal differences of the Indo-Guyanese towards marriage when compared to the Afro- and Mixed Guyanese. This analysis has important implications for the process of assimilation in Guyana, as the Indians constitute the majority of the population.

METHODS

Data

Cross-sectional data from Guyana collected in 2004 was used for this study. A three-stage random probability sampling procedure facilitated by the Guyana Bureau of Statistics resulted in a sample of 948 respondents. Utilizing information from the 2002 census, minor areas (tracts) were selected at the first stage, enumeration districts (blocks) at the second, and households at the final stage. In the rural area, villages were selected at the first stage, and complete listing of lots and dwelling units were made
available. Lots were selected at the second stage of sampling, and households at the final stage. In both the rural and urban areas a head of household or a partner was interviewed. For a select 100 families, both the head and partner were interviewed. Data was collected over a 4-week period by 20 trained field workers using face-to-face interviews.

Sample

A total of 948 surveys were completed achieving a 92% response rate. The sample consisted of 615 women and their age ranged from 19-92 years, with an average of 45.5 years. Majority of respondents were Afro-Guyanese (53.8%), followed by Indo-Guyanese (28.8%), and Mixed-Guyanese (15.3%). About 2.1% of this sample was of other races, namely, Amerindian, Chinese, and Portuguese. The overall population composition was not representative of the national population distribution, because of the sampling techniques used for this study.

The urban sample is representative of the urban population in Guyana and mirrors the census population distribution within a 3% margin of error. The rural sample, however, is represented only of Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese living along one of the coastal regions of the country. In rural-Guyana, there are several ethnic villages, however only three Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese villages were selected as part of the rural sample for this study.

The sample of interest consisted of 273 Indo-Guyanese respondents of which 61% were females. Nearly 66% of the Indo-Guyanese lived in urban areas, while 88% of the other racial groups lived in urban areas. The average age of the Indo-Guyanese was 44.7 years and they had completed an average schooling of 8 years.

Majority of the Mixed–Guyanese consist of the “douglas” - the Guyanese term for interracial unions of Afro- and Indo-Guyanese. This group is of interest to the study, as they in principle represent the well-acculturated Guyanese. By comparing the behavior
patterns of the mixed group with the ‘pure’ groups, it was examined if certain ethnic patterns tend to be dominant in interracial unions.

Hypothesis

Three specific hypotheses were developed based on the review of literature to answer the underlying research question: given that the Indo-Guyanese are a majority in the Guyanese context, but a minority in the Caribbean context, do they have distinct attitudes towards marriage from the other Guyanese?:

(1) Indo-Guyanese will attach more importance to marriage than other Guyanese.
(2) Indo-Guyanese will have different reasons for marriage than other Guyanese
(3) Indo-Guyanese will be less tolerant of exogamy when compared to other Guyanese.

FINDINGS

Importance of marriage

In the Caribbean, marriage is still considered to be the most important union (Barrow, 1999; Ellis, 1986). Despite this fact, the decision to marry and its importance, who to marry and when are all personal decisions influenced by the social location, cultural beliefs and other structural factors in which Caribbean people are imbedded. In the Caribbean, there is the ongoing dialectic between the importance of marriage and the practice of it. While the literature suggests that marriage, as an institution is important, researchers tend to look at the practices and infer differently. Nonetheless, large-scale empirical assessment of the perception of marriage is lacking in the region. We examined this perception by asking for participants’ response to the question: “How important do you think it is for men/ women to get married”? The question was asked separately about men and women and possible response categories were: very important, somewhat important, not very important and not important at all. Based on the literature, it is expected that the perception of marriage will vary by race: Indo-Guyanese
is likely to perceive marriage as being more important than the Afro- and Mixed-Guyanese.

Overall majority of the Guyanese reported that marriage was very important for both men and women and only about 2% reported that it was not important at all. When analyzed by race, it was found that the Indo-Guyanese reported slightly higher percentages for the perceived importance of marriage for both men and women (Table 1). Nearly 77% of the Indo-Guyanese perceived marriage to be very important for men and while it is true of 71% of Mixed Guyanese. Only about 1.2% of the Indo-Guyanese perceived marriage to be not important at all for the men and women, while it was true of 4.3% of the Mixed-Guyanese. Nearly 79% of the Indo-Guyanese perceived marriage to be very important for the women while it was true of only 74% of the Afro and 69% of the mixed Guyanese. It is interesting to note that among the Indo-Guyanese marriage was considered slightly more important for the women than for the men, while the reverse is true for the Afro- and Mixed-Guyanese (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The apparent racial differences in the perceived importance of marriage for men and women (Table 1) were statistically tested for using the independent sample t-test. It was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the Indo-Guyanese and others in perceived importance of marriage for women (t = -2.14, df=555.15, p<0.05) but not for men. The direction of the means indicates that Indo-Guyanese consider marriage to be more important for women than for men.

Reasons for marriage

There are many reasons why one decides to marry and literature suggests that men and women have different reasons for marriage. Caribbean men’s marriages are often associated with the notion of “settling” down; however for women it simply implies
domestic, as well as economic security (Barrow, 1999; Zaidi, 2003). In traditional economies where work is family-based, marriage provides a means of providing continuity and stability of the existing family. Marriages were arranged to preserve family property, protect the socioeconomic status and further political linkages. In the western industrialized societies, marriages are self-arranged or “autonomous” based on notions of love and romance (Lee & Stone, 1980, p: 319). In a nuclear family system a marriage signifies the formation of a new family but extended family systems view marriage as a means of recruiting new members to the existing family (Lee & Stone, 1980). Romantic love seems to have utmost importance in mate selection in the western society, while family continuity and economic stability are more important in traditional societies (Theodorson, 1965).

A forced choice-design was used for collecting data on reasons for marriage and hence the respondents chose from the following five reasons for marrying: respect in the community, the opportunity to share resources and improve standard of living, security provided for children, the companionship while doing things together, and the opportunity it gives to share love and affection with each other. The data shows that the first choice as a reason to get married for Guyanese women is to share love and affection, as it was true of 30.9% of .the Indo-Guyanese and 37% of the others (Table 2a). The second most popular reason (first choice) for Guyanese women is that marriage provides security for children, according to 29.3% of Indo-Guyanese and 36% of the others. It should be noted, however, that there is only a negligible difference between the leading first choices for marriage of women: less than 2% for Indo-Guyanese and 0.4% for the other Guyanese. Respect in society appears to be the least popular reason for marriage of Guyanese women. It is difficult to say that ‘love and
affection’ is clearly the most popular reason for marriage among the Guyanese women as there was only about a 1% difference from ‘security for children.’

[Insert Table 2b about here]

A similar trend was seen among the men as well, as the first choice for marriage of men is ‘to share love and affection’ for 27.3% of the Indo-Guyanese and 36% of the other Guyanese (Table 2b). Security for children was the second most common reason for marriage of men according to 26.6% of the Indo-Guyanese and 32.8% of the others. It is interesting to note that among the Indo-Guyanese men there was only a 0.6% difference between the top two reasons while there was a 4% difference for the other Guyanese men. This suggests that love and affection is not distinctly the most popular reason for marriage among the Indo-Guyanese men and women. Similar to the women, respect was the least important reason for the marriage of men according to 12.1% of the Indo-Guyanese and 9.4% of the others. Sharing resources was a much more commonly reported reason for marriage among the Indo-Guyanese men and women when compared to the others. Indo-Guyanese men and women were nearly 1.8 times more likely than the other Guyanese to consider “Sharing resources” as a most popular reason for marriage. This finding is supported by literature that suggests that work-based economies view marriage as being important for utilitarian rather than romantic reasons (Lee & Stone, 1980; Theodorson, 1965).

The respondents who were in a relationship were also asked to choose the most important benefit (from the same five reasons for marriage) that they had received from their marriage or relationship. Security for children was the most commonly reported benefit from the marriage/relationship for the Indo-Guyanese (33%), while for the other Guyanese it was ‘love and affection.’ Companionship was the second popular benefit from marriage for both the Indo-Guyanese (24.1%) and the other Guyanese (25.4%). Respect in the community was clearly the least important benefit of marriage as nearly
40% of the Indo-Guyanese and 46.2% of the other Guyanese reported it to be the fifth important benefit of marriage. Sharing resources was reported as a top (first choice) benefit of marriage by nearly 16% of the Indo-Guyanese respondents while it was true for only 9.2% of the other Guyanese. Comparing the general (Table 2) and personal (Table 3) reasons for marriage it is concluded that there is much similarity in the perceived reasons for marriage and the actual benefit obtained from the marriage. Nonetheless security for children outranked love and affection for Indo-Guyanese while the ranking for the other Guyanese remain relatively the same as a first choice.

**EXOGAMY**

Literature suggests that people of Indian origin in the Caribbean tend to be ethnically endogamous and resistant to interracial marriages (Jayawardena, 1962; Klass, 1961; Sharma, 1986). The rate of ethnic intermarriage is a good measure of the level of community separation or assimilation. According to Gordon when marital assimilation takes place the minority group loses its identity in the larger society (Gordon, 1964, Bell, 1970). The Indo-Guyanese still continue to retain their cultural identity and hence it was expected there would be a low level of marital assimilation. It was expected that the Indo-Guyanese would be less open to exogamy when compared to the other Guyanese.

In order to measure the attitude of the Guyanese on exogamy the respondents were asked how much they would mind it if their close relative were to marry a person of a different race: “If one of your close relatives should marry an Afro-/ Indo-/Mixed-Guyanese/ Amerindian person, would you mind it a lot, a little or not at all?” The question was phrased to be indirect as it is a sensitive issue involving their personal biases. The majority of the Guyanese did not seem to be against interracial marriage, which is consistent with previous research findings (Wilson & Smith, 1993).
Close to a quarter of the Indo-Guyanese reported that they would mind it a little or a lot if their close relative were to marry an Afro-Guyanese (Table 4). On the contrary only 12% of the Afro-Guyanese said they had some reservations about a close relative marrying an Indo-Guyanese. When asked about marrying a Mixed Guyanese nearly 20% of the Indo-Guyanese expressed some hesitation while it was true of only 10% of the Afro-Guyanese. In the case of marrying an Amerindian nearly 20% of the Indo-Guyanese had some reservations, while it was true of only 11% of the Afro-Guyanese. Thus it is evident from the data that the Indo-Guyanese still have reservations about interracial marriage, despite living in the Caribbean for over 150 years. The data also suggests that the Indo-Guyanese were 5% less likely to prefer an Indo-Guyanese marrying an Afro-Guyanese, when compared to their preference to marrying Amerindians and Mixed-Guyanese. This finding provides empirical support to literature that suggests that Indo-Guyanese prefer proximity to whiteness rather than blackness (Mohammed, 2002; Birth, 1997).

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Regional comparison of views on exogamy revealed an interesting trend on the views of urban and rural Guyanese. It was found that the urban Indo-Guyanese were more open to exogamy when compared to their rural counterparts, who tend to live in ethnic enclaves. Nearly 77% of the urban Indo-Guyanese had no reservations about a close relative marrying an Afro-Guyanese, while it was true of only 66% of the rural Indo-Guyanese. Literature suggests that urban Guyanese are more creolized and therefore it is reasonable to expect a greater tolerance of exogamy among them rather than the more traditional rural Indo-Guyanese. In the case of the other Guyanese the reverse pattern was seen, as nearly 65% of the urban Afro-and Mixed Guyanese reported that they had no reservations about marriage with an Indo-Guyanese while it was true of 78% of their rural counterparts. Greater tolerance of exogamy among the rural Afro- and
Mixed Guyanese could be due to the fact that rural communities tend to be ethnic enclaves; there is a lot of inter-racial interaction among the Guyanese for economic reasons and other mutual interests such as food, entertainment and sporting events.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

DISCUSSION

The underlying question raised in this paper was: given that the Indo-Guyanese are a majority in the Guyanese context, but a minority in the Caribbean context, do they have distinct attitudes towards marriage from the other Guyanese? Our data from a large study in Guyana in 2004 provided some answers.

First, while a larger proportion of Indo-Guyanese were more likely than the other Guyanese to regard marriage as “very important”, there were differences by gender. It was found that Indo-Guyanese regarded marriage to be more important for women than for men, as there were no statistically significant differences between levels of importance attached to marriage for men when compared by race. This is consistent with literature that suggests that marriage and motherhood are ideals for the Indo-Caribbean women (Barrow, 1998). Overall Caribbean women are known to be more eager than men to enter a marital union, because it grants them respectability, reputation, identity and honor (Wilson, 1969; Powell, 1986). Caribbean men in contrast are usually reluctant to take on the economic burden of purchasing a home and supporting a wife and family (Barrow, 1998) and are cautious about being “trapped” into marriage commitment and responsibility, and prefer to father children without any conjugal commitments (Barrow, 1998: 353). It is interesting to note that there were no significant racial differences in the importance attached to marriage for men, which diverges from the finding in 1987 that the Indo-Guyanese viewed marriage as being significantly more important for men and women when compared to the other race groups of urban Guyana (Samuel, 2006). It appears that over time the Indo-Guyanese
have remained conservative in their views on importance of marriage for women, while the same cannot be said of the Indo-Guyanese males. Marriage appears to be less important for the Indo-Guyanese males than it was nearly 17 years ago.

Second, our data suggested that ‘to share love and affection’ was not distinctly the most popular reason for marriage for the Indo-Guyanese, as it was for the other Guyanese. Security for children was an equally popular reason for marriage among the Indo-Guyanese and the most popular benefit received from marriage. For the other Guyanese ‘sharing love and affection’ was reported to be the most important benefit received from the marriage/relationship which indicates that while the dominant Guyanese culture lean toward the Western ideals of romantic love. The Indo-Guyanese in contrast are influenced by their cultural roots from a traditional non-westernized society that views marriage as a means of establishing family continuity and economic stability (Eshleman, 2003; Theodorson, 1965).

Finally, it was found that the majority of the Indo-Guyanese did not have any reservations on interracial marriages, but they were less open minded than the Afro-Guyanese. Nearly a quarter of the Indo-Guyanese expressed some reservations about marrying an Afro-Guyanese. They were more open to marrying an AmerIndian or Mixed-Guyanese person than an Afro-Guyanese person. This is consistent with literature that the Indo-Guyanese prefer endogamy by race first and then by religion and caste (Barrow, 1999; Mohammed, 2002; Sharma, 1986). It was also found that the urban Indo-Guyanese, who are believed to be more Creolized were more open to exogamy when compared to their rural counterparts.

Overall then, the results of the analysis suggests that the Indo-Guyanese have different about towards marriage when compared to the other Guyanese, despite the fact that they have been living in the Caribbean for over a century whose dominant culture is very different from the traditional Indian culture. Hence some of these
attitudinal differences may be attributed to their cultural traits. It is therefore concluded that the Indo-Guyanese have *resisted* the *interpenetration* of the dominant Caribbean *sentiments* and *attitudes* (Alba & Nee, 1997) as it relates to perceptions on marriage and hence maintained their status as an ethnically distinct group in the Caribbean.
REFERENCES


Table 1: Comparing importance of marriage by race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Importance of marriage</th>
<th>Indo-G N~260</th>
<th>Afro-G N~500</th>
<th>Mixed-G N~160</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of Marriage</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} choice</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} choice</td>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} choice</td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo- G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share resources</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security for children</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; affection</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share resources</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security for children</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; affection</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2b: Ranking of reasons of marriage for men by race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons of Marriage</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
<th>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indo- G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share resources</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security for children</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; affection</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share resources</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security for children</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; affection</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons of Marriage</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>4th choice</td>
<td>5th choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo- G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share resources</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security for children</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; affection</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share resources</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security for children</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; affection</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Comparing views on exogamy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you mind marrying a...</th>
<th>Afro-G</th>
<th>Indo-G</th>
<th>Mixed-G</th>
<th>AmeriIndian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IG</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>IG</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The process by which various ethnic groups acculturate into the dominant Afro-Caribbean ‘Creole’ culture of the Caribbean.

Human investigations committee approval was obtained through the Institutional review board of Wayne State University for use of the data.