Recognition of Cultural Behaviours In Trinidad and Tobago

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Abstract

Aims

This study aimed to document cultural behaviours that exist in Trinidad and Tobago and to study the indigenous population's awareness, perception and description of these behaviours.

Methods

Through quota sampling, a sample of five hundred and thirty-six respondents (N=536) were administered a questionnaire that gathered self-report data on Trinidad culture.

Results

Through parametric testing, respondents were aware of six of the nine identified behaviours and perceived five of them to be a part of the Trinidadian culture. Other significant findings were socio-demographic variables with respect to smartman syndrome, carnival mentality, demon possession and spiritual travel. In addition, awareness was not a determinant of culture, but was strongly correlated with the perception that the behaviour was a part of culture (r = 0.894, p<0.001) and that there was a relationship between perception of the behaviour as part of culture and the number of descriptive levels constituting that behaviour (r = - 0.677, p< 0.05).

Conclusion

This study has relevance to the behaviour of migrant groups both from the sending and receiving countries since the relics of a culture persist despite cultural changes.

INTRODUCTION

The influences of culture and mental health have been an area of interest of early researchers [1,2,3]. Later, social scientists viewed psychiatric illness as a form of social deviancy where the individual was regarded as mentally ill because he had broken the local codes of social conduct [4]. This concept of psychiatric disorders as a deviation from social and cultural norms rather than a product of an underlying biological dysfunction has not been accepted by many psychiatrists. Some are of the opinion that social impairment is insufficient and psychiatric diagnosis should be made only on the basis of mental status, not in terms of cultural behaviour. Today, the tangential progression from

behaviour to rationalization of identity to syndrome and then to psychosis remains invariably enigmatic and untenable. However, attempts to bridge this divide have been made through the introduction of a multiaxial system that promotes the application of a biopsychosocial model [5].

Cultural behaviours can be defined as an adaptive response occurring in organized social groups whose lifestyles, sentiments and interactions have been transgenerationally transmitted. These cultural factors determine behaviour and through a system of ego-protective defense mechanisms help to define an individual's relationship with his environment. These behaviours are often associated with compensatory

processes of rationalization and are sometimes conceptualized in the context of native humour.

Cultural behaviours are different from culture-bound syndromes. The latter has been defined as recurrent locality-specific pattern of aberrant behaviour and troubling experiences that may or may not be linked to a particular DSM-IV-TR diagnostic category. Many of these patterns are indigenously considered to be illnesses or at least afflictions and most have local names [5]. Culture bound syndromes are thus culturally determined abnormal behaviour patterns that are specific to a particular culture or geographical region. The behaviours express core cultural themes, and have a wide range of symbolic meanings – social, moral and psychological [6].

Genuine culturebound syndromes are not exclusively linked to a particular culture but rather related to a prominent cultural emphasis or to a specific social stress situation [7, 8]. Syndromes have been described with a cultural emphasis on a number of themes. Some are related to fertility and procreation such as koro in Malay-Indonesian language, Jiryan in India, Dhat syndrome [9,10,11,12,13] and suo-yang in Madarin-Chinese [9,10,11, 13]. Others focus on physical appearance such as taijin-kuofu among the Japanese [14,15,16], learnt dissociation such as latah and amok in Malay-Indonesia language [17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25], and acculturative stress such as brain fag symptoms in African students [26,27].

Over the past two decades, Trinidad and Tobago resplendent in its cultural diversity has attracted a number of visiting researchers. Littlewood [28] has described Tabanca (lovesick behaviour) as an indigenous conceptualization of depression in rural Trinidad. This, he claims is an affliction of working class Afro-Caribbean males who aspire to white and middle class values and lifestyles. His views are considered to be a misinterpretation of this cultural phenomenon. Local psychiatrists [29, 30] have been critical of his findings stating that he did not take into account the cultural milieu that colours expression of the behaviour and that he was blinkered by his own unconscious cultural assumptions. Similarly, Eriksen [31] has described liming in Trinidad as a dignified art of doing nothing, noting that one cannot be recognized as a real Trinidadian unless one masters the art of doing nothing. A British research team [32], in a socio-political motivated study has investigated the incidence of psychosis in Trinidad in response to reports of high incidences amongst the Afro-Caribbean population in Britain.

There is concern for the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of indigenous cultural phenomenon and the utilization of findings and conclusions by foreign researchers. Their interpretations of cultural behaviours as culture bound syndromes or progressing to chronic insanity [28] can be quite misleading and border on assumptions of cultural hegemony.

The purpose of this study is two-fold :

1. To document cultural behaviours that exist in Trinidad and Tobago thereby minimizing interpretation and misrepresentation of these phenomena by those not exposed to the culture.

2. To study the indigenous population's awareness, perception and description of these behaviours.

METHOD

In order to understand the cultural behaviours examined in this study, it is necessary to indicate how these behaviours were initially identified. Therefore as part of our methodology we undertook a pre-study survey to identify cultural behaviours within Trinidad and Tobago, before proceeding into the method for the current study.

IDENTIFYING CULTURAL BEHAVIOURS

In a semi-structured interview designed to identify cultural behaviour patterns of Trinidad and Tobago (Appendix 1) a stratified random sample of 52 respondents were chosen. This sample was representative of the general population with respect to age, sex, ethnicity, social class, marital status and education [33].

Behaviour was defined as "the whole way of life of people" and involved both traditional practices handed down from generation to generation and descriptions of contemporary social behaviours. Interestingly, more than half, 30 respondents (58%) considered religious or spiritual beliefs and practices as not being part of culture. A total of nine (9) behaviours were identified: Obsessional Lateness, Smartman Syndrome, Liming, Middle Age Indian Woman Syndrome, Tabanca, Carnival Mentality, Demon Possession, Spiritual Travel and Playboy Personality. A tenth behaviour, obeah, was excluded because 62% felt it was also widespread in other Caribbean regions.

SAMPLE AND INSTRUMENTS – MEASURING CULTURAL BEHAVIOURS

Through quota sampling, a new sample of five hundred and

thirty-six respondents (N=536) were administered a questionnaire that gathered self-report data on Trinidad culture (the nine behaviours identified). The sample population was similar to the population distribution of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to employment, religion, ethnicity, gender and social class [33]. The questionnaire collected data on the following:

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Data was gathered along the variables of age, sex, ethnicity (Afro-Trinidadians, Indo-Trinidadians, Mixed and Other), nationality and social class (low, middle and upper). Ethnicity or an individual's ethnic group was determined on the basis of the following criteria: (1) having at least three out of four grandparents belonging to the same ethnic group or if criteria (1) was not met, they were then categorized as Mixed. The Mixed ethnicity refers to individuals who are the resulting offspring of a union between two different ethnic groups and usually have distinctive physical traits that mark him from both parent ethnic groups, but may also possess some characteristics of manner, thought and speech, which are derived from both lines of ancestry. The ethnicity category of Other includes those individuals who cannot be placed in the ethnic categories of Afro-Trinidadians, Indo-Trinidadians and Mixed. They also belong to ethnic groups that comprise a small percentage of the total population of Trinidad. e.g. Chinese, Syrian and Caucasian. Social class was derived using both occupation and income brackets as described by Meltzer et al. [34].

AWARENESS OF BEHAVIOUR

This variable was dichotomous and respondents were asked if they had ever heard of each of the nine behaviours. The response set was either "yes" or "no".

A DESCRIPTION OF THE BEHAVIOUR

If a respondent was aware of a particular behaviour, they were asked to give a brief description of the behaviour, state whether it is an entity or not, and if it is associated with any particular symptoms. The descriptions of the behaviours were then coded into several categories by two raters. It must be noted that the coding of the descriptions were done twice to ensure that there would be inter-rater reliability.

PERCEPTION OF THE BEHAVIOUR AS BEING PART OF TRINIDAD CULTURE

The response set was again either "yes" or "no". Respondents were asked for each of the nine behaviours whether they perceived it to be part of the culture of

Trinidad and Tobago.

ANALYSIS

Data was entered and analyzed by the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 8.0). The statistical test chosen for awareness of behaviour and perception of the behaviour as being part of Trinidad culture was Chi-Square tests as data was collected along a nominal level. In order to distinguish behaviours that were strongly perceived as being part of Trinidad culture, percentiles that were within the upper quarter (75% cutoff point) were utilized [35]. Additional correlation analyses were also performed. The level of significance was set at a $p < 0.05$ level.

RESULTS

From the questionnaire survey of 536 participants, the nine behaviours (Obsessional Lateness, Smartman Syndrome, Liming, Middle Age Indian Woman Syndrome, Tabanca, Carnival Mentality, Demon Possession, Spiritual Travel and Playboy Personality) were analysed in the following categories:

a) Demographic data of sampled population
b) Awareness of the behaviour
c) Description of the behaviour
d) Perception of the behaviour as part of culture

Demographic data of sampled population

Majority of the sample (98%) was Trinidadian with 2% non-Trinidadian. Indo-Trinidadians accounted for 39% of the sample, Afro-Trinidadians 35%, Mixed 24% and Other 2%. Ages of the respondents ranged from 14-56 with the mean age being 35. Sixty percent (60%) was in the 14-25 age group, 18% in the 26-35 age group, 12% in the 36-45 age group and 10% in the over 45 age group. With respect to social class, 52% was from the middle class, 27% from the lower class and 21% from the upper class.

B) AWARENESS OF BEHAVIOUR

Overall, ninety-nine percent (99%) of the sample was aware or was familiar with the behaviour of liming, 97% each for carnival mentality and playboy personality, 95% tabanca, obsessive lateness 92%, smartman syndrome 80%, demon possession 73%, spiritual travel 66% and middle age Indian woman syndrome 11%. (See Chart 1).

Figure 1

Chart 1
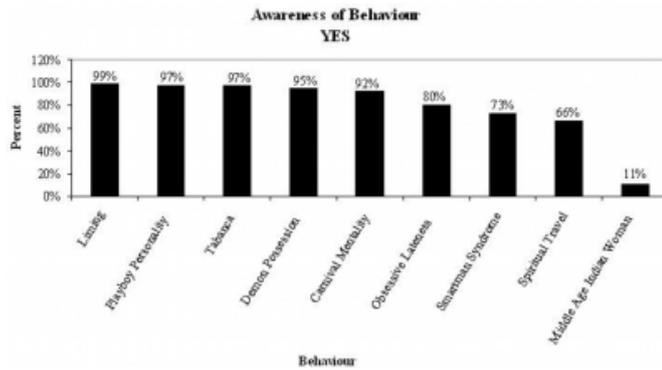
A greater percentage of Afro-Trinidadians were familiar with the behaviour of obsessional lateness than Indo-Trinidadians, Mixed persons and Others. This was significant where $X2 = 8.404$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.05$. Indo-Trinidadians were also more familiar with smartman syndrome than Afro-Trinidadians, Mixed and Other individuals. This was significant where $X2 = 11.590$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.01$.

Significant differences existed for the awareness of carnival mentality and smartman syndrome between social classes. Middle class individuals (55%) were more aware of the behaviour of carnival mentality than lower class (24%) and upper class (22%); and also were more aware of demon possession (53%) than lower class (25%) and upper class individuals (21%). These differences were significant where $X2 = 13.337$, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.001$ and $X2 = 7.150$, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.05$, respectively.

The 14-25 age group was more aware of the term smartman syndrome and carnival mentality than other age groups, where $X2 = 15.049$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.01$ and $X2 = 12.721$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.001$. No other significant differences were found between this variable and other demographic data.

C) DESCRIPTION OF BEHAVIOUR

The following descriptions of different behaviour are summative characteristics based on answers given by respondents who were familiar with the culture.

Liming was described as a scheduled or non-scheduled event where a group of people (friends, family, acquaintances etc.) takes time to "hang out". The concept transcends ethnicity, class and religious barriers. It is an activity geared towards relaxation, stress relief through the means of talking, eating and drinking or just "doing nothing". As clearly put by one respondent, liming is a major cultural activity from river

lime, after work lime or duck lime; and can also be seen as working in sync with our "poor work ethic" and "carnival mentality". (See Table 1)

Figure 2

Table 1: Characteristics of Liming

Characteristics	%
1. Major cultural activity / Scheduled or Non-scheduled episode where a group of people take time off to "hang out"/be idle/get together/do nothing	96
2. Activity geared towards stress relief	3
3. Mentality of liming causes laid back attitude / poor work ethic / carnival mentality	0.5
4. Turn any place into a liming spot	0.5

Carnival mentality was seen as having two dimensions: during carnival season and outside of carnival period. During the carnival season, carnival mentality has been viewed as a "time to free up", "time to break away and get on bad" or take part in every carnival activity or event and indulging in alcohol, immoral, vulgar, and promiscuous activities without thinking of the consequences. Outside of the carnival season, carnival mentality refers to the "non-stop party mentality" that is practiced throughout the year; where every event or occasion is treated as a excuse "to lime or party". Some respondents have regarded carnival mentality as "extreme liming" or "continuous fun in the sun". Carnival mentality was also seen as having filtered into the workplace where individuals have a very slack, laid back or "don't give a damn" attitude towards work. Carnival mentality was also referred to by a minority of respondents as mindlessness, when you hear music nothing could stop you from dancing, having too many parties in the calendar and events having attributes of carnival. (See Table 2)

Figure 3

Table 2: Characteristics of Carnival Mentality

Characteristics	%
1. Non-stop party mentality/ continuous fun in the sun/ "extreme liming"	51.4
2. Take part in every carnival activity or event/ time to break away and get on bad, immoral vulgar activities/ time to free up	21.0
3. Attitude to work very laid back, slack/ don't give a damn	19.0
4. Mindlessness, not thinking of consequences/ indulging in alcohol, promiscuity	3.0
5. Time to free up	3.2
6. When you hear soca, nothing could stop you from dancing	0.9
7. Having attributes of carnival e.g. cricket or football match	0.9
8. Too much parties in calendar	0.5

Playboy personality was described as Trinidadian men who have multiple girlfriends but only seek attention and sexual satisfaction from them. They dress sharp, have lots of money and drive expensive cars. They are sexually involved with all of their partners but never emotionally involved. A player (one who has a playboy personality) was also identified as one who thinks he is God's gift to women, a real charmer and is said to tackle "anything in a skirt that pass". He is identified as a "sweetman", that is someone who knows all the right words to say and how to wine and dine the women he is currently seeing. Less than 1% of respondents viewed playboy personality as a person who commits adultery, behaviour that is adopted from another culture or passed on by adults when a guy says he is in love but he is lying. (See Table 3)

Figure 4

Table 3: Characteristics of Playboy Personality

Characteristics	%
1. Trini men with multiple girlfriends who just crave attention, sexual interests/ sexually involved but not emotionally involved	74.5
2. One who thinks he is god's gift to women and plays the hearts of many women/ charmer / sweetman/ player / have to have "anything in a skirt that pass"	23.5
3. Commits adultery or cheats on partner	0.8
4. Player attitude passed on by adults	0.4
5. Adopted from a different culture	0.4
6. Guy says he is in love but he is lying	0.4

Tabanca is a form of "love sickness". It was described as 'a state of depression' accompanied by withdrawal symptoms (can't eat, can't sleep) that occurs when one has been rejected by a loved one or experiences unrequited love. It is an adjustment disorder of losing a loved one. The term is also used to describe the feeling of being in love where one is constantly thinking, daydreaming and totally "head over heels" with someone, the mental anguish of getting "horn"[5] and having girlfriend/boyfriend worries or "a case of Love Jones". Severe tabanca has been described as "tabantruck". (See Table 4).

Figure 5

Table 4

Characteristics	%
1. Love sickness; person who gets dumped goes through a state of depression and withdrawal symptoms: can't eat, sleep/ adjustment disorder of losing a loved one / if symptoms severe known as tabantruck	71.2
2. Being in love, fall head over heels with someone, daydreaming etc.	17.9
3. Mental anguish of getting "horn"	6.1
4. Girlfriend/boyfriend worries/ "Love Jones"	3.1
5. Don't eat, don't sleep	1.3
6. When a male and female think they should be together	0.4

CHARACTERISTICS OF TABANCA

The respondents have clearly defined obsessional lateness as having no regard for punctuality and lateness as being a part of our nature. In short it is functioning with "trini time". It is arriving late for any event or occasion at least 15-45 minutes after the scheduled time. According to respondents, "any time is trini time" shows exactly how laid back individuals are in their behaviour; and it has often been said that a trini "will be late for his own funeral". Arriving late was seen by some as being fashionably late and was due to being disorganized, waiting on the 11th hour to do something that leads to rushing and thus being late. (See Table 5)

Figure 6

Table 5 : Characteristics of Obsessional Lateness

Characteristics	%
1. Reaching late for all events, may even reach late for own funeral / No regard for punctuality / Fashionably late, "just to show your face" / Operating on "trini time"	99
2. Watching too much T.V. at night	1

Individuals who have the ability to outsmart anyone or "hoodwink anyone" usually by means of lying, trickery, deceit and dishonesty display the Smartman syndrome. These individuals are conartists who seek to get things for

little or no value. In local parlance, it refers to individuals who are trying to get "something for nothing" or "trying to pull a fast one." This behaviour is also used to describe people who always have an answer for everything, a "smart retort" or "a bandage for every cut". Few respondents described a smartman as being one who fools and uses many women for their own benefit (similar to player), being a bully, being quiet and not talking too much and acting very stupid, that is, "playing dead to catch corbeaux alive" (See Table 6)

Figure 7
Table 6: Characteristics of Smartman Syndrome

Characteristics	%
1. The ability to outsmart or "hoodwink" somebody, usually through dishonest means / conmen / trying to get "something for nothing" or "trying to pull a fast one"	65
2. Always a smart retort / "bandage for every cut"	19
3. People who act smart	5
4. Getting things for little or no value	4
5. Player who uses many women/ fooling them	3
6. Bully	2
7. Quiet, not talking much	1
8. Playing very stupid – "playing dead to catch corbeaux alive"	1

Demon possession was mostly viewed as when a spirit or demon took over the body and the person is unaware of what is happening. It was also seen to be attributed to an individual acting in a strange and unexplainable manner not consistent with his /her normal behaviour pattern, or acting crazy. Some people referred to demon possession as similar to evil, obeah, witchcraft and bad things constantly happening to you. Few described demon possession as an anxiety attack, talking constantly, folklore and myths and as a manifestation of abnormal behaviour usually schizophrenia. Table 7 describes the characteristics associated with demon possession. (See Table 7)

Figure 8
Table 7: Characteristics of Demon Possession

Characteristics	%
1. When spirits/demon take over body and person unaware of what is happening	55.5
2. Acting crazy/ acting similar to if a demon possessed a person/ strange unexplainable behaviour	29.4
3. Obeah / evil/ witchcraft	11.3
4. Folklore and myths as part of culture	1.7
5. Manifestation of abnormal behaviour, usually schizophrenia	0.8
6. Anxiety attack	0.8
7. Talks constantly/ overly energetic and frisky	0.4

Spiritual travel was defined as the ability of a spirit to travel out of the body; more specifically, respondents identified the transcendental travel of the soul on the mourning ground as a practice of the Spiritual Baptist faith. It is also associated to other religious sects involved in the practices of "ketching power" and loud singing and clapping. Other views of spiritual travel were that it is an episode that occurs while praying and brings you closer to God, is obeah/voodoo or it is when you are given the word of God in order to practice religion properly. It occurs in a state close to death when the spirit gradually leaves the body and is a state when one can have visions or dreams. It was described as a mostly religious related activity. (See Table 8)

Figure 9
Table 8: Characteristics of Spiritual Travel

Characteristics	%
1. The ability to travel out of the body/ transcendental travel on mourning ground / practice of Spiritual Baptists.	65.0
2. Religious sect involved in practices like that/ "ketching power" and loud clapping and singing	17.2
3. Going through an episode that brings you closer to god/ holy trans evoked while praying	8.0
4. Obeah/Voodoo	4.3
5. After baptism, given information to practice religion/ behaviour when speaking the word of god	3.1
6. Stage close to death and spirit gradually leaving body	0.6
7. Visions, dreams, or dazed while in that state	1.8

Middle age Indian woman syndrome was neither clearly nor consistently defined within one category. It was referred to as Indian women who stay at home, are extremely obsessional about their family and who neglect their physical appearance. In addition, the syndrome was seen as being

associated with behaviour directed to recapture a youthful past, being fat around the waist and complaining of pains in the joints, forever quarrelling with the children and husband and having extra marital affairs. (See Table 9)

Figure 10

Table 9: Characteristics of Middle Age Indian Woman Syndrome

Characteristics	%
1. Extremely obsessive about family, stays at home and neglects physical appearance	30
2. Types of behaviour associated with youthful past	23
3. Behaving like an Indian woman at middle age	10
4. Fat around the waist and complaining of joints	10
5. Individual attracted to middle age Indian women	10
6. Looking old and tired but they are young	7
7. Forever quarrelling with children and husband	3.3
8. Extra marital affairs between 30-40	3.3
9. Menopause	3.3

D) PERCEPTION OF BEHAVIOUR AS PART OF CULTURE

The measurements of respondents' perception of behaviours seen as part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago were as follows: Liming (96%), carnival mentality (93%) were perceived as being part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, followed by playboy personality 83%, tabanca 82%, obsessive lateness 77%, smartman syndrome 65%, demon possession 55%, spiritual travel 46% and middle age Indian woman syndrome 9%. (See Chart 2).

Figure 11

Chart 2

Behaviour that is part of Trinidad culture YES
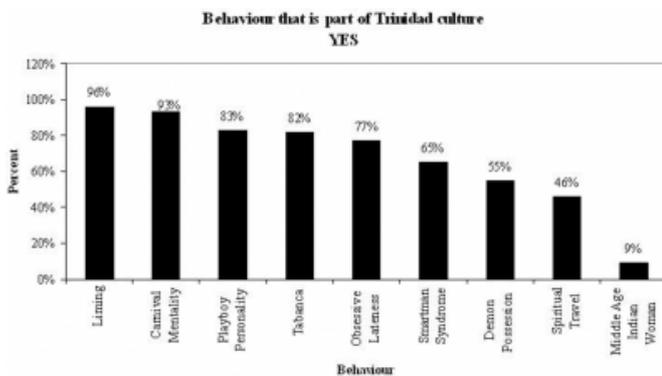
Significant differences existed between ethnic groups and their view of demon possession as a part of Trinidad culture. Indo-Trinidadians were more likely (50%) than Afro-

Trinidadians (30%), Mixed (17%) and Other (3%) individuals to view demon possession as a part of Trinidad culture. This was significant where $X2 = 16.369$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.001$.

Middle class individuals (52%) and lower class individuals (32%) were more likely than upper class individuals (16%) to view demon possession as being a part of Trinidad culture. This difference was near significance where $X2 = 5.3481$, d.f. = 2, $p = 0.06$.

The 14-25 age group was more likely than other age groups to view smartman syndrome and playboy personality as a part of culture, this was significant where $X2 = 10.014$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.01$ and $X2 = 8.449$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.05$ respectively. No other significant differences were found between this variable and other demographic data.

LINK BETWEEN AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF BEHAVIOUR AS PART OF CULTURE

A strong correlational relationship existed between awareness and the perception that the behaviour is a part of culture. This was significant where $r = 0.894$, $p < 0.001$. However, it was discovered that high awareness is not a necessity for a determinant of culture. This is evident especially for demon possession where 95% of respondents were aware of culture but only 55% perceived it as being a part of culture.

Another significant correlational relationship existed between the perception of the behaviour as a culture and the number of levels constituting a behaviour where $r = -0.677$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore as the number of levels in describing a behaviour increases the less likely it is to be considered a part of the culture. This however, did not pertain to demon possession and spiritual travel.

DISCUSSION

Nine behaviours namely, Liming, Carnival Mentality, Player or Playboy Personality, Tabanca, Obsessional Lateness, Smartman Syndrome, Demon Possession, Spiritual Travel and The Middle-Age Indian Woman Syndrome were identified as existent cultural behaviours. Attempts to validate whether a particular behaviour was part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago was no easy task. Using a cut-off point of more than a 75 percent respondent rate [35] resulted in the rejection of four behaviours namely, Smartman Syndrome, Demon Possession, Spiritual Travel and the Middle-Age Indian Woman Syndrome which fell

below the 75 percentile. (Chart 2).

There were however a number of limitations. The use of an opportunity sample may have resulted in lower figures in awareness and perception of behaviour as part of culture due to the skewing of the age groupings to the younger working groups. This, in our opinion may have resulted in lower figures in awareness and perception of the behaviour as part of culture. The strong correlation between awareness and perception that behaviour was part of culture was not always robust. In the case of demon possession 95% of respondents were aware of the culture, but only 55% perceived it as part of culture. This substantiates the view that awareness of a phenomenon is not sufficient to categorize it as a cultural behaviour. In addition, it was found that the greater the number of levels used in describing a culture, the less likely it was found to be part of the culture (r = -0.677, p < 0.05). However, it must be noted that the correlation coefficient be interpreted with caution, as correlation does not equal causation and there is possibility of third variables that may have an impact on the investigated variables [36].

Another interesting finding was that while respondents viewed social and traditional practices as cultural behaviour, they were less likely to perceive religious related behaviour as part of culture. This may have resulted in the low response rates for Demon Possession and Spiritual Travel which were not viewed as cultural behaviour. The divide of religion and culture in Trinidad and Tobago is promulgated by the dichotomy of one culture (East Indian) with many religions and one religion (Christianity) with many cultures often in competition with each other. The post slavery emphasis of distancing religion from culture may have been an attempt to gain reputation and respectability for religious beliefs.

Almost all the respondents (99%) were aware of liming and ninety-six percent described it as a scheduled or non-scheduled episode where a group of people take time off to hang out, be idle, get together or do nothing. The concept of liming as a social institution and cultural state of mind in Trinidad was reviewed by Eriksen [31]. He described it as a unique Trinidadian pastime of 'the art of doing nothing' and noted that whereas idling and inactivity are frequently perceived unequivocally as shameful and immoral in most societies, liming in Trinidad is an activity that one would not hesitate to indulge in proudly. Despite its occurrence elsewhere, in Trinidad it is different; it is a social situation acknowledged as a form of the performing art linked to the key symbols of carnival, calypso and steelband. In our study, liming was a feature of all groups, regardless of age, ethnicity, religion or class that utilized cultural archetypal mechanisms for the relief of stress.

Carnival is the Republic's best known festival ushering the season of Lent. The carnival season extends from Christmas to Lent, but outside this period 'a carnival mentality of having attributes to carnival' was described (Table 2). There is abandonment of the social structures of work, family life, education and law. One commentator, the Prime Minister of Singapore, a country well known for its industry has argued that the behaviour depicted at carnival is pervasive throughout the year and has referred to the population of Trinidad as having a carnival mentality [37]. In response, Liverpool [38], has pointed out that "in speaking of Trinidadians as having a carnival mentality, they seek to degrade our people, for they seek to say that to possess such a mentality is to live for today, to play 'mas', to have a good time and then to beg on Ash Wednesday morning. In other words, it is to live aimlessly." The urgency of carnival to many is well portrayed in Lovelace's novel – "The Dragon Can't Dance" in the characterization of Aldrick Prospect. He would get up at midday from sleep, not knowing where his next meal was coming from, 'his brain working in the same smooth, unhurried nonchalance with which he moved his feet, a slow cruising crawl which he quickened only at carnival" [39]. Thus, the enthusiasm and energy devoted to carnival is not displayed in everyday life. Trinidadians, especially those of African descent are often described as a 'happy go lucky people' with little commitment to hard work. According to Eriksen, [31] "a common assumption, not least common in the urban working class itself is that black-working-class Trinidadians don't invest themselves in respectable activities such as wage work and family life. Life is too sweet".

In our study the carnival mentality was described as having a "non stop party mentality", a time to indulge in "bad or immoral activities" and having a "slack and laid back attitude to work" (Table 2). The invariable negative connotation of carnival mentality in our sample goes against the possibility of subgroup bias or stereotypy. A significant number, 97 percent of our respondents were aware of the carnival mentality behaviour and 92 percent identified it as being part of the islands' culture. A significant finding was that the middle social class was more aware of the carnival mentality (p < 0.001). A possible explanation is that members of this group are employed with the Civil Service and will be aware of the established work ethics.

The Trinidadian male and by extension the Caribbean man attain social ascendancy and status if they are perceived as 'macho'. Such behaviours of male individuals with multiple partners as "sexually involved but not emotionally involved" and "god's gift to woman" (Table 8) have been met with exaltation and reinforcement in many national songs such as the Mighty Sparrow calypso – "The Village Ram" [40]. The playboy personality or 'player' the term commonly used by teenagers is a 'woman charmer or sweetman' who is by nature polygamous but will jealously guard fidelity in his partners. For him, there are no restrictions in making a 'play' on any woman. Contingencies of marital or social status, the feelings of others or moral issue are non-consequential. Within society there are social sanctions that undermine values of honesty, integrity and morality. The young age group of 14-25 years were more convinced that the playboy personality was a part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and more common among Afro-Trinidadians.

Eighty-two percent of the respondents felt that Tabanca was part of the Trinidad culture. In Trinidad and Tobago, Tabanca or the loss of a loved one with ruminations of the loss object has been described as an indigenous conceptualization of depression [28]. Local researchers have argued that this love-struck behaviour is the feeling one gets when rejected by a partner or love object and is circumscribed in the pathos of culturally-determined confrontational humor known as 'picong' [29]. This process allows the individual to work through his feelings of loss and rejection in a cognitive behavioural context of minimization, levity and social support. Although contemporarily considered to be a 'culture bound syndrome' this behaviour has been locally described as an adjustment disorder. It is culturally recognizable particularly when the loss is known to one's peers. The individual may experience a temporary decrease in worth, humour and esteem by way of the satirical and jocular treatment from his or her peers. This in itself is cathartic and leads to resolution.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there is a pervasive cultural attitude of disrespect or unconcern for time. It is customary for individuals even in high office to arrive late for all events without any regard for protocol or punctuality. There is no feeling of shame since their lateness is culturally perceived as a commitment to duty and dedication to hard work that prevented them from being on time. In addition, this behaviour is reinforced since their late appearance is often announced with adequate excuses of 'circumstances beyond their control' Due to the looseness of time, "just to show your face" is considered sufficient. Ninety-nine percent of the sampled population correctly described this behaviour.

Obsessional lateness or the inability to keep time is inherent in our population and is well tolerated. In this behaviour, appointments are made and never met and lateness is culturally accepted. Trinidadian sportsmen in the United Kingdom have been disciplined and heavily fined for lateness. In the recent World Trade Centre disaster, the Trinidad Guardian newspaper [41] carried the following story: "Many Trinidadians and Tobagonians are thanking God, and some because of their place of birth they were either late for work, still making their way to work or took a day off on Tuesday when two hijacked planes hit New York's World Trade Centre, killing an unknown number of people".

It is noteworthy that the cultural behaviours, liming, carnival mentality, playboy personality, tabanca and obsessional lateness are closely related. These behaviours have as their themes negative characteristics of doing nothing, sexual liaison and its sequaelae and a lack of respect for time. The latter can be interpreted as subsets of the carnival mentality, all interrelated to the basic instincts of primary process thinking.

From our analysis, Smartman Syndrome, Demon Possession, Spiritual Travel and Middle-Age Indian Woman Syndrome were rejected by the respondents as being part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. The summative characteristics for the most part were multidimensional with many levels of description. The Trinidadian 'smartman' is not unique in his ability to contrive, connive, scheme and out do other people when compared with other countries. Indo-Trinidadians were more familiar with the Smartman Syndrome. A possible explanation is their involvement in business.

Demonical Possession and Spiritual Travel were not considered to be culture-based behaviours. This may be due to the perception that they are established religious practices ordained by the Christian and Baptist churches respectively. Indo-Trinidadians however, were more likely to view demon possession as part of the Trinidadian culture while the majority of Afro-Christians attributed it to their religious beliefs. A cross-sectional study indicated that 71 percent of the total sample believed in the existence of demons and 65 percent thought that demons could possess people [42]. It is however, difficult to separate religion from culture since all religious groups have incorporated religio-magical thinking and exorcism as part of their theological practices and are

engaged in faith-healing and the casting out of demons.

Many religious groups in Trinidad and Tobago believe in the concept of spiritual or astral travel. This is an out-of-body experience, induced by sensory deprivation whereby the soul of the pilgrim (mourner) leaves the body and travels to distant lands, meeting new people and becoming exposed to experiences that serve to strengthen one's faith and allow his/her ascendancy within the hierarchy of the church. This practice is not well known locally and commonly performed by followers of the Baptist religion in the mourning ground ceremony. It is not unique to Trinidad [43].

The Middle-Age Indian Woman Syndrome is a somatoform disorder of mostly female Indo-Trinidadians who present for treatment with multiple somatic complaints at clinics and hospitals. This was rejected by the respondents, as it was not clearly or consistently defined within one particular dimension. This in itself gave statistical credibility to the respondents' responses by incorporating an entity known in the medical circles and testing it within the general population.

Inter-rater reliability (95%) demonstrated no differences in dimensions of behaviours of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. In conclusion, using a 75% response rate, respondents were aware of six of the nine identified behaviours and perceived five of them to be part of the Trinidadian culture. Smartman syndrome and the middle age Indian woman syndrome were rejected as cultural phenomena both with respect to awareness and perception. The religious nature of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and their tolerance and respect for each other strengthened by elements of cultural fusion are plausible explanations for respondents exclusion of religious-related activities as culture based. This would have resulted in the exclusion of Spiritual Travel and Demon Possession. In this study, the validity of our findings are supported by the triangulation of the results with previous reports and descriptions.

Cultures are dynamic rather than static and while the wheel of culture can go around for centuries without notable disturbance [44], cultures can change when value system of a society changes. Nevertheless, the relics of a culture can still remain around when the culture changes. According to Jones [45] many cultures see their future in terms of preserving the past. It is important therefore, that documentation be made of the cultural behaviours of immigrants from both the sending and receiving countries in order to understand their emotional, behavioural and thinking processes. For many, the old culture remains fixed on migration, despite changes in the country of origin.

GLOSSARY

Trinidad – term used in this study to mean the islands of Trinidad and Tobago

River lime – activity of liming that takes place near or on the bank of a river

After work lime - liming that takes place after working hours, usually on Fridays, at the end of the working week

Duck lime - liming that involves the cooking and eating of a duck

Time to free up & Time to get on bad – chorus from calypsoes urging the population to relax. Sometimes refers to indulgence in alcohol, vulgar and immoral activities without even thinking of the consequences of one's actions

Anything in a skirt that pass - refers to an attraction to all female individuals regardless of age, ethnic group or marital status

Macho – refers to an individual, usually a male who is domineering, assertive and polygamous. Taken from the advertisement, "Rum is macho"

Sweetman – someone who is considered to be very charming and doesn't hesitate to spend money entertaining a woman

Horn - refers to the act when the your partner is unfaithful to you in the relationship – infidelity

Tabantruck – symptoms of tabanca so severe they cannot figuratively, fit in a car but needs a truck ("taban-truck" as opposed to "taban-car")

Trini time - is the term coined by Trinidadians to refer to their own inherent nature of being late to any event Just to show your face - the term used to describe when someone only makes an appearance at an event or occasion

Something for nothing & Trying to pull a fast one – refers to when an individual tries to outsmart someone or tries to negotiate an offer where he is the only one gaining

Bandage for every cut – having an answer for every question or problem

Obeah – refers to an African tradition of sorcery

Mourning ground – refers to the place where a follower of

the Spiritual Baptist faith goes in order to perform Spiritual travel

Ketching power - refers to acting in a state similar as if one were possessed by a spirit or demon (shaking and trembling of body, eyes rolling etc.)

Playing dead to catch corbeaux alive – corbeaux are vultures that feed on dead carcasses. 'The smartman' will pretend to be stupid to gain an advantage.

APPENDIX 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR IDENTIFYING CULTURAL BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Introduction: We are conducting a survey on people's behaviour in Trinidad and Tobago and we are requesting your participation in answering a few questions.

1. Demographics

2. Age _____

3. Sex: Male [1] Female [2]

4. Ethnic Group: African [1] Indian [2] Mixed [3] Other [4]

5. Marital Status: Single [1] Common-Law [2] Married [3] Separated [4] Divorced [5]

6. Education Level: Primary [1] Secondary [2] Tertiary [3]

7. Occupation & Monthly Income _____

8. Social Class Lower [1] Middle [2] Upper [3]

9. Culture

10. What do you understand by the word behaviour?

11. Does behaviour include culture – lifestyle, food, music etc. of people?

12. If yes, to question 7, what are the cultural practices (handed down behaviour) that you are aware of in this country?

13. Are there any other social patterns i.e. how people generally behave that are unique to our people?

14. If hitherto not mentioned, do you consider

religious or spiritual beliefs or practices as part of behaviour or culture?

16. If yes, can you describe them?

17. If no, how would you interpret these religious practices?

1. Are your descriptions only found in:

3. Trinidad and Tobago

4. Other regions

5. Don't know.

THANK YOU.

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