

Working for 'The Man'

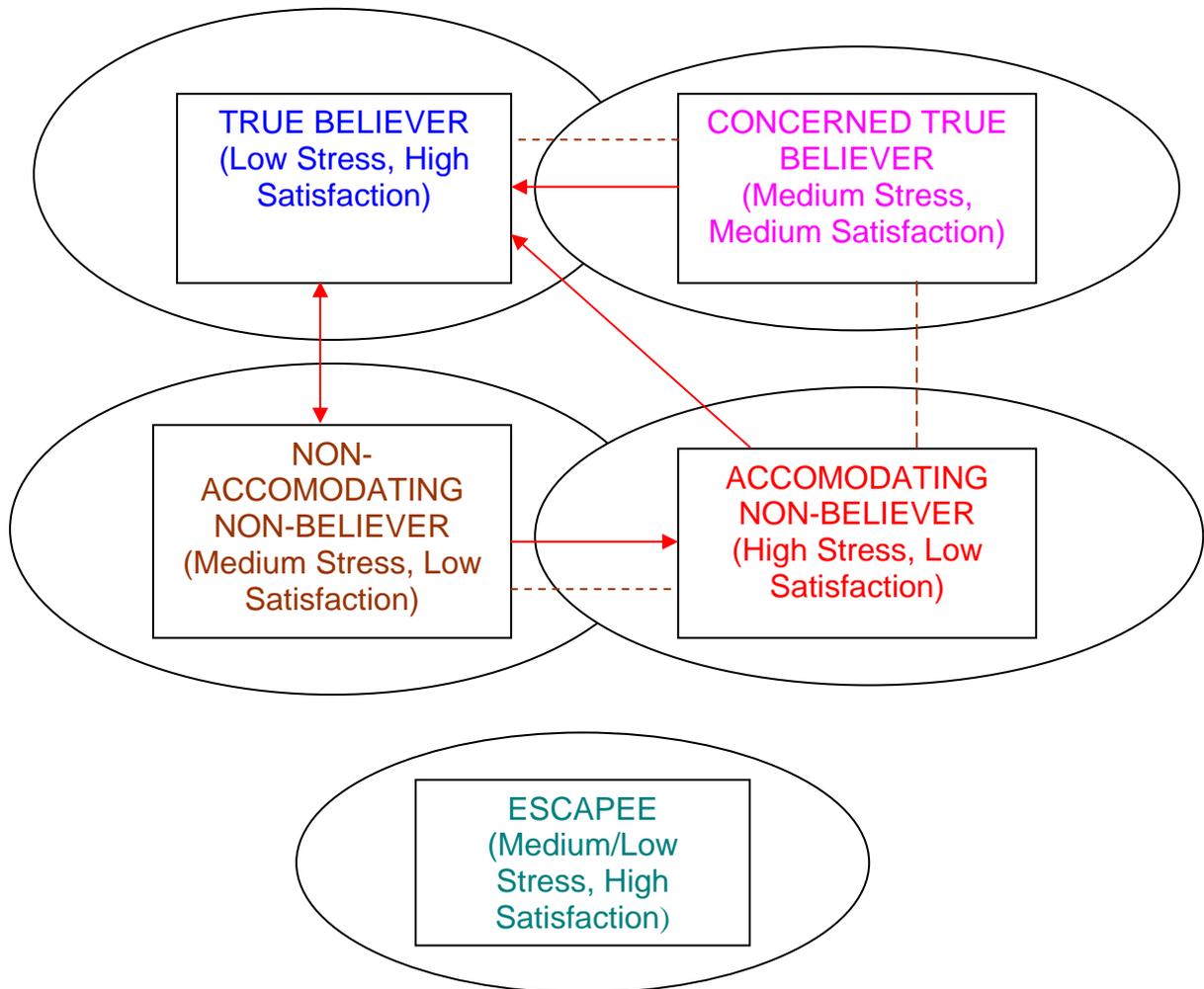
How do Afrikans get by working within Caucasian organisations? Most people I meet seem to be dissatisfied with their lot at work and this tendency increases sharply for Afrikans. However, most people have no intention of leaving their job, or at least giving up doing the type of work they say they dislike. Again, this tendency increases for Afrikans. Many Afrikans moan and complain about their jobs and racist Caucasian managers, however due to a combination of economic and psychological dependency cannot get off the White financial breast.

In my previous book I compared the psychology of Afrikan men with the field slave, house slave, runaway and Maroon. That great ancestor Professor Jacob Carruthers suggested that 10% of Afrikans suffered from mild cultural dislocation, 80% from moderate cultural dislocation and 10% severe cultural dislocation. The latter 90% if put in the position of a runaway would not know where to run and this is the position of most Afrikans in employment. Most Afrikans I know dislike/hate their jobs but are even more afraid of the forbidding land outside of the bureaucratic plantation. With signposts marked 'Self-Sufficiency' and 'Economic Independence' it is indeed a strange and frightening prospect for most Afrikans. We were born on the White financial breast and that is where most of us will die.

So how do Afrikan employees cope psychologically in Caucasian Institutions? Apart from individual personality traits and coping mechanisms, which are of course extremely important, I believe the most important determinant of how we behave, cope and 'get on' in white organisations is our worldview, which determines whether we will believe in the capacity of our employing organisation, and Caucasian Institutions in general, to bring about fundamental change in their area or field of operation.

I have set out below a generalist model illustrating four psychological positions from which I believe most people – irrespective of ethnicity – operate within Institutions. As suggested earlier, personality characteristics will have a strong bearing on an individual's 'institutional modus operandi', for example some people are innately sceptical and suspicious of authority, however worldview will be perhaps even more important, especially when the factor of race is added to the employment equation.

Diagram (i) - Psychological Positions within Institutions



Key: Arrows between ovals represent potential lines of conflict (arrowhead indicates direction of emotional energy)

Dashed lines between ovals represent potential lines of alliance

In relation to the above diagram I would suggest that as a generalisation the 'True Believer' and 'Concerned True Believer' psychological positions most comfortably fit with a Negro assimilationist/integrationist worldview (as described in my previous book). A classic example of a 'True Believer' is Trevor Phillips the Head of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and a man aptly described by Diane Abbott MP (Member of Parliament) as the 'most important Negro in Britain'. Mr Phillips delights in attacking Afrikan people – particularly men – and adopting political positions that are so anti-Afrikan that they win him plaudits from Richard Littlejohn (a notorious rightwing journalist) and the British National Party (a neo-nazi political party) amongst others.

The 'Accommodating Non-Believer' and 'Non-Accommodating Non-Believer' positions fit with a 'Black/Runaway' worldview and where someone sits in relation to these two boxes will largely be determined by personality type.

All things being equal, in general terms The True Believer will be the happiest and least stressed of our four employee types. The Accommodating Non-Believer will be the least satisfied and most stressed given their lack of belief in the organisation's purpose and constant battle to 'stay in the loop' whilst maintaining their principles. They will constantly wrestle with their conscience and dream desperately of 'escaping', however it should be noted that this group can still be quite effective in levering change for Afrikan people within the confines of what is possible within a Caucasian Institution.

The Non-Accommodating Non-Believer will gain little satisfaction from their work and may experience a significant degree of stress due to being isolated and labelled as a troublemaker by many of their colleagues. They will however feel more at ease than the Accommodating Non-Believer and experience lower levels of stress. The Non-Accommodating Non-Believer runs the risk of tilting at lots of windmills and fighting lots of battles but never winning a war. There is a danger that this type of person comes to view the battle as the end rather than the means, however they are just the type of person you want with you when your back is against the organisational wall.

The Concerned True Believer may have concerns in relation to specific aspects of their work, however they do not aspire to escape and believe in the capacity of Caucasian organisations collectively to bring about transformational societal change, which they are much more likely to think about in class rather than race terms in any case.

The fifth and final position is beyond the institutional walls. The escapee is the Afrikan/Maroon in worldview. The escapee has not just escaped from employee status economically, for there are many successful Negro businesspeople. The escapee has escaped spiritually, culturally and psychologically. They have spat out the White breast and found the means for physical and metaphysical sustenance. The Believers cannot even comprehend what it is to be an escapee, whilst most Non-Believers only dream of it. It is the Non-Believers who tie their dreams to plans and have courage who will escape the plantation boundaries.

As said earlier it is your worldview that determines your behaviour. Whilst it is possible to keep your thoughts to yourself when the organisation demands action contradictions can come to the fore.

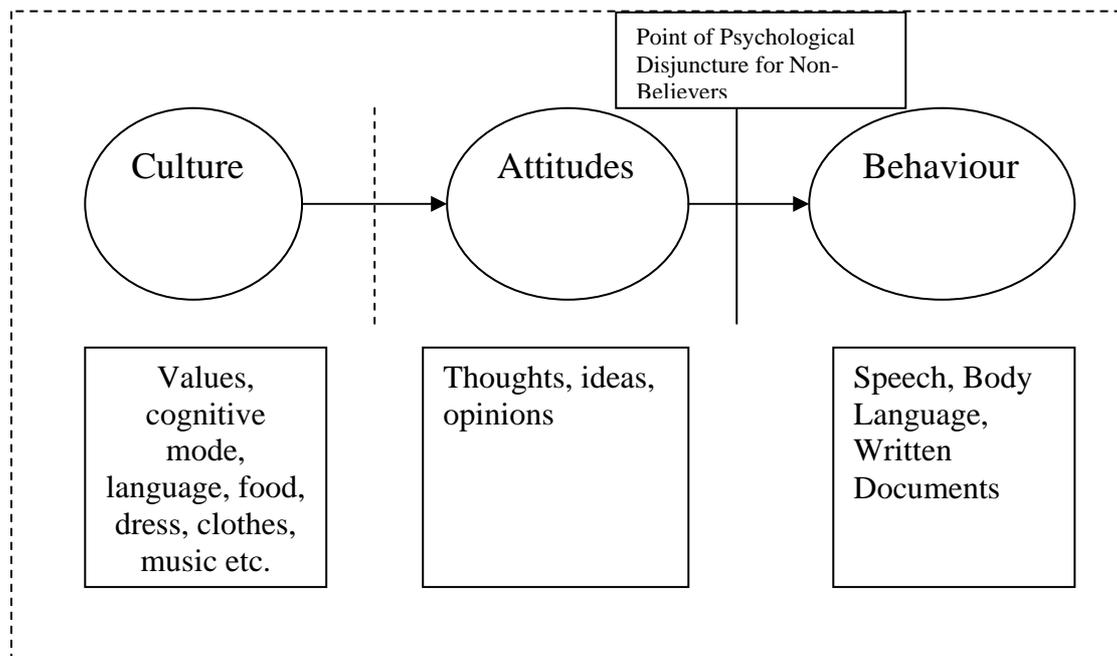


Diagram (ii) – The interface between culture, thought and behaviour

It is when forced to act on certain crucial value laden issues that one has to reveal one's cultural/psychological hand – or act against one's beliefs - and this is when institutional life can become difficult for non-believers.

Let us now move on to look at how institutions deal with dissent and examine how this alters depending upon a person's position within the organisational hierarchy.

Common Institutional Behavioural Expectations of Employees

Position in Contemporary Hierarchy	Plantation Hierarchical Equivalent	Organisational Expectation	Allowable contemporary limits of Non-compliance	Contemporary Organisational response to unacceptable non-compliance
Junior	Field Slave/House Slave	Passive	Grumbling	Paternalistic indulgence or the Sack
Junior Middle Manager	'Trustee' Slave	Representational	Querying	Censure
Senior Middle Manager	Overseer	Advocate/Cheerleader	Questioning	Marginalisation, Career Blockage
Senior Executive	Senior Overseer	Proselytiser	Challenging	'Walk The Plank', Jump or get Pushed

Table 1

Now you may be wondering why I have correlated positions in an institutional hierarchy with those on a plantation. You may even be feeling particularly aggrieved depending upon where you are in your organisational hierarchy. You may be thinking this is another example of the Afrocentric obsession with slavery and a victim psychology. Well, we always have to go back to the essential nature of things then examine the context in which events or activities take place. Chattel slavery was an institution, a cultural institution. As I noted in my previous book (Grant 2003) the fundamental essence and defining qualities of an Institution are not the buildings or objects associated with its operation, but rather its ability to create and maintain thoughts, ideas, practices and processes and to function over a prolonged period of time irrespective of leadership/personnel changes. By this definition European chattel slavery was an institution.

Chattel slavery was a product of European cultural thought and practice. The European organisations/institutions in which most Afrikans work are also the products of European cultural thought and practice. The same mindset created both. They operate differently on a surface level because of the changed context – social, political, economic, technological and environmental - in which we operate. This means for example that the type of penalties enforced for non-compliance on a plantation are of a completely different order to those used by contemporary organisations. However, one thing that is shared by both is the use of psychological techniques to create compliance and this is how Caucasian behaviour towards Afrikans in 'the West' has changed over the years. Overt violence is used more sparingly whilst there is an ever increasing focus on the use of psychological techniques (and medical warfare) to pacify and conquer Afrikans.

In working for Caucasian institutions there are some simple tips I would offer for Non-Believers (True Believers will probably have put this book down by now):

- Think explicitly about how you operate psychologically and politically within your organisation
- Know the things you can change, those you can't, and how to tell the difference

- Hatch an Escape Plan as soon as you start a new job. Be clear with yourself about how long you want to stay with that employer and what you want to get out of your time in post
- Be on your guard. Seek allies but vet them carefully. Do not engage in 'free talk', especially with non-Afrikan or Negroes
- To know what you are for is even more important than knowing what you are against
- Save for a hurricane and not just a rainy day
- Do not believe that you can get away with what Caucasians get away with without possible adverse consequences (Do as the policies say not as they do)
- Do not be naïve enough to believe that you are going to transform institutional practice. Try to make sure the institution does not transform you.
- Always strive for excellence and do not collude with or support Afrikan incompetence. Work in line with Afrikan principles (e.g. Ma'at, The Ten Afrikan Virtues [see Part IV for latter]) and you will not go far wrong.
- Be ready for the test. At some point Caucasians will seek to test your loyalties and allegiance. If you are economically vulnerable or culturally weak you will find it hard to resist.
- Keep written records of supervision notes, important decisions, your key achievements etc. You never know when you will be asked to justify your role
- Remember that stress is a function of feeling powerless allied to attaching great importance to your work (either economically, psychologically or both). Do not be afraid to say that you have too much work (and justify it in writing). Do not be afraid to take your holidays. Do not invest too much of your self image in your work for Caucasian Institutions.
- IIF YOU ARE UNHAPPY GET OUT AS SOON AS YOU CAN! (I need to take my own advice).

As usual Marcus Mosiah Garvey gets to the heart of our dependency.

"Oh, how disgusting life becomes when on every hand you hear people (who bear your image, who bear your resemblance) telling you that they cannot make it, that Fate is against them, that they cannot get a chance. If 400,000,000 Negroes can only get to know themselves, to know that in them is a sovereign power, is an authority that is absolute then in the next twenty four hours we would have a new race, we would have a nation, an empire, - resurrected, not from the will of others to see us rise, - but from our own determination to rise, irrespective of what the world thinks." (Garvey 1986: 39)

Marcus Garvey is speaking here of the psychological component of Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), without which no kind of freedom - be it economic, social, cultural or political - is possible. If we learn nothing else we must learn this.

