THEORY AND METHOD IN SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH: ADVANCES AND INNOVATIONS

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THEORY AND METHOD IN SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH: ADVANCES AND INNOVATIONS

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(Commissioned by the Subcommittee on Methodology and the Analysis of Research)

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PREFACE

This publication forms part of a recent programme to assess the state of the social and human sciences in South Africa. The Analysis of Research in the Human Sciences programme, as it was known, commenced in 1993 under the auspices of the Human Sciences Research Council. The programme was concluded in 1995 (Final report entitled "Social knowledge for societal transformation").

Four main areas of analysis were identified by the steering committee early on in the programme. These were: issues related to research resources; the implementation and usefulness of human sciences research; quality of research; and methodological and epistemological issues.

The subcommittee[1] which was appointed to investigate methodological and epistemological issues spelt its objectives out in more detail. The following more specific goals were identified:

■ To present a historical overview of the emergence and development of different methodological approaches within South African social sciences;

■ To record attitudes towards methodological and epistemological developments within particular debates;

   To address the issue of, and future scope for, interdisciplinary work in the human and social sciences.

The committee decided to involve as many scholars as possible in this review. For this reason more than 20 papers were commissioned in 1995. This book reprints a selection of these commissioned papers. The select bibliography at the end of the book was compiled by Lesley Powell under the guidance of Johann Mouton. Its aim is to present an overview of methodological and epistemological publications by South African authors over the past three decades. It does not claim to be comprehensive, but provides sufficient

evidence of the broad scope and interests of South African human scientists in these areas.

The editors hope that this collection will become a useful reference source for all social scientists who are interested in methodological and epistemological issues. We believe that it presents an accurate reflection of the range of work and level of sophistication that South African scholars have attained in this domain. We must make two points about the editing: first, some contributions had to be shortened because of constraints of space; secondly, we have tried throughout not to change peculiarities in style. The different authors have clearly interpreted their brief quite differently. We have, unless it seemed to us to be essential, chosen to keep contributions as much as possible as they were originally written.

Editors: Johann Mouton
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with
Peter Franks and
Themba Sono

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1   Peter Franks (Chair), Johann Mouton, Johan Muller and Themba Sono.

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and trends, such as the rise of post-modernism and the decline of Marxism, have also affected South African theoretical debates.

Before we discuss in more detail the specific contributions collected in this anthology, we will distinguish more systematically between methodological and theoretical reflections. We will also refer to other contributions in these areas which are not included here.

Methodology and theory

Methodology is defined as the "logic of social inquiry". Methodological reflection refers to any inquiry into the nature and structure of the process of empirical inquiry. It has become customary to distinguish between the specific methods and techniques that are employed in the practice of research, and broader methodological paradigms or approaches. Whereas "methods" and "techniques" refer to the actual "tools" used by social scientists, such as historical, statistical, survey, experimental and case study methods, "methodology" usually refers to the underlying logic or principles that are presupposed in the usage of such methods and techniques. A methodology is a systematic approach to research which involves a clear preference for certain methods and techniques within the framework of specific epistemological and ontological assumptions. This means that the choice for certain methods and techniques is embedded in assumptions about the nature and aims of knowledge (epistemological assumptions) and assumptions about the social world and human nature (ontological assumptions).

It has become customary to distinguish between at least three main methodological approaches or paradigms in empirical social inquiry, namely the quantitative, qualitative and participatory/action approaches. In the light of what was argued above, it should be clear that differences between these paradigms are not merely at the level of method and technique, but involve fundamental differences about the aim of social research, what constitutes valid knowledge, which

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Tracking trends in theory and method: Past and future

Johann Mouton and Johan Muller

Why is a review of methodological and theoretical developments and innovations in a discipline or collection of disciplines important and, perhaps, even useful? We would argue that an interest in methodology and theorizing in the social sciences is part and parcel of the intellectual enterprise. The human scientist cannot but reflect continuously on what he or she is doing, what assumptions and presuppositions play a role in social inquiry, which theoretical traditions and paradigms are influential in determining, or at least influencing, research choices and agendas. Methodological and theoretical scholarship is essential to research itself because it represents the critical interest of all inquiry.

It is important, though, to stress that we would not defend a position according to which methodological and theoretical reflections are viewed as insulated from the world. Social inquiry is a social practice, which means that it reflects historical, political, moral and social interests. This is also true of research methodology and theory. This is clearly illustrated in many of the contributions collected here. Methodological developments (and sometimes innovations) in cross-cultural research and rural sampling (to mention only two) were, and still are, affected by the cultural diversity and specific demographics of South African society. But developments in methodology and theory are not only influenced by local factors. As we will see, the increasing globalization of social science means that international developments

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features of the social world can be investigated, and so on. We will return to this distinction further on.

The notion of "theoretical reflection" is equally complex. Various distinctions are possible, but we believe that it is important at least to distinguish between "substantive theories" and "social theory". Substantive theories would include all those hypotheses and explanatory frameworks that are offered to account for phenomena in the human world. Such theories range in scope from very specific micro-theories to middle-range theories to rather "grand" theories, such as those of Parsons and Freud. What they all have in common is an intention to explain some aspect of human behaviour. "Social theory" refers to a more general, philosophical reflection on the nature of human nature and society. Tony Giddens describes it in the following terms:

Social theory in my view, spans social science. It is a body of theory shared in common by all disciplines concerned with the behaviour of human beings. It concerns not only sociology, therefore, but also anthropology, economics, politics, human geography, psychology – the whole range of the social sciences. Neither is social readily separable from questions of interest to an even wider set of concerns: it connects through to literary criticism on the one hand and to the philosophy of the natural sciences on the other. (Giddens, 1982:5-6).

Even this distinction does not uniquely denote what everyone would count as "social theorizing". Some social theory, such as Marxism and phenomenology, is fairly close to grand substantive theories. Other forms of social theory, such as post-modernism, critical realism and critical theory, are perhaps closer to philosophical analyses. We believe it is impossible to make these distinctions less fuzzy and would hope that the reader finds the contributions that are included under this heading to be somewhat self-explanatory.

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Social theory and South African scholarship

To say that theory in the social sciences diverges rather than converges is a commonplace. Unlike the natural sciences, where knowledge structures are broadly pyramidical and where knowledge growth is vertical and consequently widely acknowledged by the scholarly community, the social sciences are characterized by horizontal clusters of self-enclosed communities of discourse which rarely communicate with each other, much less acknowledge each others' existence, even though they manifestly share the same objects of study (Bernstein, 1996). There may be modest vertical knowledge growth within each cluster, but the social sciences seem, perhaps for the meantime only, collectively to have given up the effort of driving towards a general theory of society and social behaviour, notwithstanding the continuing efforts of such highly respected writers as Habermas and Giddens. Theoretical disputes are now resolved simply by founding a new paradigm or sub-school.

Much of this pluralism which is characteristic of social science globally is the result of successive waves of disputes which were never definitively concluded : the 'positivismusstreit' in Germany, for example, and the convulsive debates triggered off by the structuralist and post-structuralist challenges concerning the linguistic structure of the social world. Most recently, the post-modern celebration of difference, diversity and particularity, and its distaste for the very attempt at over-arching explanation has provided justification, as if it were needed, for irretrievable pluralization.

Pluralism may be seen as a sign of health and vigour, as the post-modernists see it, or as a function of fragmentation and disciplinary weakness, as the modernists of both left and right do. The fact of the matter is that both dynamics are discernibly at play, and the pluralized state of South African social theory is the result of forces that are both global as well as quite particular to our own history.

There are three main forces that will continue to leave their mark on social theory and social theorising in South Africa. These are

apartheid, globalization, and the special requirements of critical reconstruction. These will each be discussed briefly.

Apartheid split the social science community in South Africa, as it did the political community, into antagonistic camps of friends and foes. The general logic of schism was of course between those who were pro-apartheid and those who were anti-apartheid, those for "the state" and those for "the people". But these camps were never homogeneous, especially not the anti-apartheid camp, and methodological as well as theoretical disputes split the "liberals" and the "neo-Marxists" on a great number of issues: for example, on the proper explanatory logic of apartheid (race or class); and on empirical methods – an entire generation of social science students at the English-speaking liberal universities were taught to equate empiricism with statism of all kinds and, in some cases, with apartheid. The hyper-politicized environment was undoubtedly to blame, but professional associations (like the national sociology and psychology associations) split in two, and it is only quite recently that anything like a national conversation has begun again in some of the disciplines. In some, like education, the sub-communities remain largely cloistered in their apartheid-designated isolation.

The very establishment of the so-called "black" campuses has left its mark on the research and scholarly activity at these institutions, and these remain poor in proven skills and capacities, and in productive research traditions. There are encouraging signs that this is beginning to change, and five years after the end of apartheid the pattern of inequalities is no longer as homogeneous as it was. Some of the historically black campuses are beginning to show a research productivity that has overtaken the rate of productivity at a number of historically white campuses (see Analysis of Research in the Human Sciences (ARHS), 1995). In particular, the proportion of South Africa's contribution to total world output of social science, as measured by science citation indices, overtook the natural science proportion in 1993. After years of isolation, South African social scientists are

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writing and publishing more than they ever have before. This is particularly marked in history and historiography.

South Africa has rejoined the global community in more ways than one. In the first place, our tertiary education sector is showing all the signs of the massification that tertiary systems worldwide undergo: escalating enrolments, the push towards greater numbers of students in postgraduate courses, and the consequent vastly increased production of graduate and postgraduate qualifications. This has stimulated scholarly traditions at some universities, though not yet at all. But the need for competent postgraduate training in research methodology is more evident now than it was before.

There is a vastly-increased two-way traffic of scholars: South Africans are going overseas, and going north, in far greater numbers and more often than before, and international scholars are visiting in droves. There are few national conferences now without a generous sprinkling of foreigners.

This recent detente with the global scholarly community has not been consistent or even. In the dark days of apartheid, the best South African scholars managed to keep selective lines of contact with certain, often quite arbitrary, groups of scholars and scholarly traditions internationally. The Duquesne school of phenomenological psychology, for example, is well represented in this country, but none of the other phenomenological traditions outside of the peculiar version that has come to be called fundamental pedagogics has made any impact here. Ethnomethodology, for example, seems to be quite unknown.

This pattern of individual South African scholars identifying with external "communities of discourse" has intensified. One unfortunate effect is that many scholars participate more readily and productively in global scholarly communities, at the expense of building strong and enduring communities, or indigenous paradigms, at home.

The global pull has thus been something of a mixed blessing. On the one hand, international debates, often cast in the same terms as they would be elsewhere, are fought out with the same ferocity here as elsewhere. The debate within the feminist community around the privileging of "experience" is as heated an issue here (see Wolpe, this volume) as it is in the USA (Scott, 1995). On the other hand, what we also see is a proliferation of mini-traditions, sometimes with one researcher, or at most a small number, being the only national representative of the mini-tradition. This trend too is reflected in this volume (for example Frost and Franks).

The demands of critical reconstruction add a third element to the mix of forces towards pluralization or fragmentation, this one arguably more unambiguously positive. The reconstructive challenges of the RDP have spawned a great demand for new kinds of knowledge and new kinds of research. Some of this work is recognizably basic or applied research of the familiar kind. But some of it requires new kinds of participation and involvement, new kinds of research skills, new forms of organizing the research (Bawa, 1995). Along with these new forms of knowledge production will come new criteria for evaluating the adequacy of the knowledge; and along with that will come new debates around the nature, validity and scope of social knowledge. Which is as it should be.

The debates represented here should then come as no great surprise. The reader will find chapters on feminism, post-colonialism, post-marxism and the new rhetoric. None of these has emerged in dramatically different or idiosyncratic ways in South Africa. All of them are as much part of global scholarship as they are of national scholarship.

What these chapters offer, therefore, is access not only to South African theory and scholarship, but to the world of theoretical innovation. There are very useful introductions here to the major debates in feminism, post-Marxism and post-colonialism, as well as to

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the intricacies and subtleties within the emergent orthodoxy of the social construction of knowledge. These domains are, therefore, simultaneously local and global.

There are also a number of singular features of these chapters, two of which deserve special mention. The first is that they all display a particular reflexivity, or awareness, verging at times on self-critique, regarding the theoretical orthodoxies of the past and, in particular, the theoretical trends that propelled the anti-apartheid movement towards political liberation. Leroke, for example, boldly defines post-colonialism as an attempt to look for a basis for theoretical moorings beyond Marxism, which was, in a variety of different forms, the prevailing liberation movement orthodoxy. Hudson, whose work Bertoldi and Van Zyl examine in some detail here, puts his finger on a series of problematic concepts – like "experience" and "ideology" – which have in his view flawed the political writings of the liberation movement as well as some of their founding documents, like the Freedom Charter. Wolpe, from a position far more sympathetic to orthodox Marxism than either Leroke or Hudson, emphasizes like Hudson the theoretical weakness of the privileging of "experience" as an explanatory notion, as well as some of its disabling political consequences. Even Sono, in a largely sympathetic review of Afrocentrism, concludes by wondering just how useful such a paradigm may end up being in our particular circumstances.

If these chapters are marked by their sensitivity to the historical context, they are, equally, marked by attention to global debates. In particular, nearly all of them position themselves with respect to the constellation of post-modernism and the various challenges it poses for theory. Nel, for instance, shows with considerable nuance how the new rhetoric is a methodological sophisticate that grows from the post-modernist turnaway from foundationalism, and concludes by warning against the over-inclusive ambitions of an approach that, like its larger parent post-modernism, quickly becomes a clarion call to

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subjectivism in the hands of the over-eager. Leroke is quite happy to align post-colonialism with post-modernism, and to oppose both to Marxists of every stripe.

Bertoldi and Van Zyl, with Hudson, implicitly distinguish between post-structuralism and post-modernism, and indeed their critique of "experience" as an organizing notion begins to display some of the problems that post-modernism's subjectivism poses for theory and politics. Wolpe makes the same point against the post-modernist feminists who, ironically in the case of feminism, claim the mantle of heirs of the liberation struggle. Each of these reflexivities thus locates South African theoretical scholarship in its simultaneously local and global position.

One of the interesting features of the South African intellectual scene is the fact that it has strong links both with the Anglo-American and continental traditions. Although it was traditionally the case that the analytic tradition was better represented at the English liberal universities and, conversely, that the continental traditions (especially German and Dutch) were more influential at the Afrikaans-medium universities, this situation is certainly changing.

For example:

- The hermeneutic paradigm (Gadamer, Betti and Ricoeur) has had a significant influence not only in traditional Biblical scholarship (*vide* the work of Vorster, Lategan, Combrink), but also in communication studies (see De Beer:1993).
- Traditional critical theory (Habermas) has been influential in psychology, education, communication studies and legal studies. In the eighties, neo-Marxist thinking, in the form of Althusser and Gramsci, became prominent in sociology, history and education (see Bertoldi and Van Zyl in this volume).
- Critical rationalism (Popper) has had its followers, most notably in economic theory as well as in theology (Maree).
- Scientific realism (Bhaskar, Harre, Secord, Outhwaite) has influenced the work of psychologists (Craig, 1990, 1992, Miller,

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Retief, 1988a, 1988b). More surprisingly, perhaps, it has also had a major impact on debates in systematic theology through the path-breaking book of Van Huyssteen (1986); see also Veldsman, 1995.

■ Other examples would have to include the impact of reception theory in many disciplines (see Lategan, 1992), the recent influence of post-modernism and related traditions like post-colonialism and post-structuralism. For these, see Bertoldi and Van Zyl, Leroke, and Sono, all in this volume.

This list — which does not claim to be comprehensive — also does not include the work of local philosophers of social science. Some of the more noteworthy publications cover topics such as ideology and social inquiry (Jansen, 1991; Mouton, 1986; Van Straaten, 1987); debates about objectivity, rationality and relativism (Van Niekerk, 1992); the nature of social theorizing (Botha, 1987; Mouton et al., 1988) and the plurality of epistemological traditions (Mouton & Joubert, 1990; Snyman, 1993).

This selection of epistemological work gives an indication of the range of interests in the field. More importantly, perhaps, many of the authors mentioned have published internationally as well. The impact locally has been to create a healthy interest in meta-theoretical discourse in many disciplines. In fact, some commentators might argue that there is too much emphasis in South African academic circles on meta-theoretical and epistemological debates and too little attention to technical-methodological issues. Although there is certainly some truth in this observation, an interest in meta-reflection in social science can only be of benefit to practising researchers. At least it provides some buffer against a wholesale degeneration into technicism.

In conclusion: despite the effects of the academic boycott, censorship (see Merret, ...) and geographical isolation, South African scholars have, albeit selectively, been able to remain up to date with debates in the northern hemisphere in epistemology and social theory. Again, despite the academic boycott, many South African scholars were able to retain some links with international networks. It is

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unfortunately also true that, despite this extensive interest in and engagement with international debates, no South African scholar has made a significant original contribution to social theory. Whether this is a legitimate criticism remains a matter of debate. It is more than likely that the issue of whether South African social theorists should continue their global concerns or attempt to become more Afrocentric and relevant to local concerns, will only intensify. In fact, some of the current attractions of post-modern social theory are exactly to be found in its insistence that social theory should be culturally sensitive and historically specific. Where such a celebration of particularity leaves the growth of knowledge remains to be seen.

Quantitative, qualitative and participatory approaches in South African social science

There is a long tradition of quantitative social research in South Africa. Two areas are worth specific mention: survey research (which would include a strong market research tradition) and psychometric testing.

Surveys are by nature predominantly descriptive. Their strength is that they provide broad and general pictures of the social world. Survey data are useful when one wishes to discover what the state of affairs is, how people think about certain matters, what their basic needs are, and so on. Opinion polling, attitudinal surveys, advertising studies and market segmentation studies, and political monitoring are all examples of the application of the survey method. All of these studies are well represented in South Africa. The Human Sciences Research Council, as well as institutions such as the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa, the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, university-based centres such as the South African Labour and Development Research Unit (UCT), the Centre for Social and Development Studies (UN), and the Institute for Social and Economic Research (UDW), research NGO's (such as the Community Agency for Social Enquiry) and the market research sector (for example Market

Research Africa, Markinor, Research Surveys) regularly conduct large national surveys (see Corder, 1995; Franks (this volume); Mouton, 1995 and Stoker (this volume).

Psychometric testing has an equally long tradition (Du Preez, this volume) in South Africa dating back to the establishment of the National Institute for Personnel Research in 1994. The development of tests for industry and educational applications has become a huge industry.

The "investment" in quantitative research, as embodied in these traditions, has resulted in pockets of methodological expertise. We have included four chapters in the book that address these, namely issues in sampling (Stoker), psychological testing and cross-cultural measurement (Du Preez and Claassen) and geographical information systems (Nel and Hill).

It is not surprising that South African scholars have paid so much attention to the methodological issues involved in sampling, given the particular demographic profile of the country and problems involved in sampling rural areas and informal settlements. Similarly, the interest in cross-cultural studies does not require justification. At the same time, there are a number of areas which have not received sufficient attention. Two are worth commenting on: the lack of secondary data analysis and the lack of a strong tradition in comparative research.

Two reasons may be offered for the lack of a strong tradition in secondary data analysis in South African social science. First, one would have to say that there is a general lack of access to large data sets, both because of problems in gaining access (until recently) to such data; secondly, because of a lack of overseas data sets being made available locally. The establishment of the South African Data Archive (accessible at www.hsrc.sada) in 1993 should go a long way to rectifying this situation.

There is also no strong history of comparative and cross-national quantitative studies in South African social science. With some exceptions, few South African researchers have undertaken large cross-

national studies. The small number of exceptions would include the work of Lawrence Schlemmer, Amanda Gouws, Hennie Kotze, Johan Olivier, Francis Wilson and others. Financial constraints (such surveys are quite expensive) as well as the lack of international contact (exacerbated by the academic boycott), could be cited as causes for this state of affairs. With the increasing normalization of our international research networks, there is a growing interest by overseas scholars in collaborating with local scholars. This should provide the long-needed impetus for more comparative studies, with a concomitant increase in interest in the analysis of large data sets and secondary data-analysis.

Qualitative studies

Traditional qualitative research approaches, such as ethnographic studies, participant observation, in-depth interviewing methods and the use of documentary sources, have a long tradition especially in anthropological and historical studies in South Africa. The names of Wilson, Kuper, Radcliffe-Brown, Hammond-Tooke and more recently Preston-Whyte, Boonzaaier, Sharp, Kotze, Gordon, and Thornton attest to a proud tradition in social anthropology. Similarly, numerous excellent studies in oral history and related disciplines have appeared (see Bozzoli, 1990b for a review). The linkage between people's history and local historical studies (as embodied in the History Workshop at Wits) is another example (see Bozzoli, 1992).

Outside of anthropology and history, one finds more isolated instances of qualitative empirical studies. Some examples are the following:

■ In psychology, a significant non-positivist tradition is the local phenomenological school. The work of Dreyer Kruger (see Kruger, 1988), now being taken further by people such as Van Vuuren (1991) and Stones (in press), continue the Duquesne tradition in the USA (Giorgi) based on the European phenomenology of Husserl and Van den Bergh.

■ There is interest in discourse analysis as exemplified in the work

of Levett (1990) and Kottler (1990). As far as the field of communication and media studies is concerned, other more qualitative work would include De Beer (1993) in journalistic studies, Tomaselli's work in semiotic analyses, and the work of the Department of Communication Studies at UNISA (see Jansen, 1989), exemplifying the existential phenomenology of Kierkegaard.

■ Empirical qualitative research in sociology is somewhat more incidental. It is worth referring, though, to the sustained wide-ranging work of Willem and Evanthe Schurink (Schurink & Schurink, 1988) and Ferreira (1990) at the HSRC.

■ At the "institutional" level it is worth referring to three research centres with a pronounced emphasis on qualitative research. The HSRC's Centre for Research Methodology, headed by Ineke Meulenburg-Buskens, a structural anthropologist in the Levi-Strauss mode, focuses most of its training and consultancy on qualitative research. In the market research world, the Qualitative Consultancy, until recently headed by Jean Green, has established a proud tradition in qualitative market research. The research organization, Ark Research, which was recently taken over by Cathy Payze, not only provides training in qualitative research methods, but has a specific focus on training in computer packages for qualitative data analysis (such as Atlas Ti, Nud*ist and Ethnograph). Training in Kwalitan is provided by Cenmet. These developments are only to be welcomed given the general lack of experience in computerized qualitative data analysis.

As an overall assessment, one must conclude that there is a long tradition of qualitative research in South Africa, especially in such disciplines as anthropology and history. Its institutionalization at South African universities in such departments as sociology, psychology and education has, however, not been widespread. It is also interesting to note that there has been no real antagonism, at least not recently, between proponents of qualitative and quantitative approaches in South Africa, certainly not as is evident in many

American universities. There have been a number of recent articles on the qualitative-quantitative issue (see Lotter, 1995, Mouton, 1983a, 1985; Schurink & Schurink, 1988) – all of which have been conciliatory and constructive in tone. On the downside, one has to admit that systematic training in qualitative research is still the exception rather than the rule. This is probably due both to the lack of suitably qualified and experienced researchers, as well as to the lack of appropriate facilities for training (such as closed circuit television observation rooms, the availability of computer packages and so on).

Participatory/ action research

Some form of participatory research has always been a feature of most traditional anthropological research. However, it is really since the sixties and early seventies that participatory action research, as a methodological approach with a critical and emancipatory interest, became popular (see Mouton, 1988 for a discussion). Its impact on South Africa has been felt primarily in educational and psychological research.

As far as educational research is concerned, the action research paradigm grew out of the people's education movement in the mid-eighties (see Davidoff, 1993). Much of this work was grafted onto a humanistic neo-marxist or critical theory tradition (Carr and Kemmis). The research interest in this kind of research is primarily practical, and only secondarily cognitive. Perhaps this is why there has been so little of this work published in the conventional research journals. Related to these developments was a growing interest in naturalistic and fourth generation educational evaluation studies (Guba and Lincoln) (see Louw, this book, for an overview). The visit to South Africa in 1993 of one of the foremost proponents of "empowerment evaluation" in the USA, David Fetterman (Stanford), lent further impetus to the popularity of this approach.

The increased interest in and influence of participatory research approaches in the late eighties and early nineties was clearly linked to

the larger political dynamics in the country. The political discourse of empowerment, participation and transparency was reflected in a shift towards methodologies that were seen to embody these ideals. It is fair to say, though, that interest in participatory research approaches is waning and that we are currently witnessing a greater appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of different methodological approaches. An important reason for this is that the new government requires a broad range of studies to support and inform new policies. In this regard, the earlier scepticism – at least from certain quarters (for example service NGO's) – towards quantitative studies is being replaced with an acknowledgment of the value of methodological pluralism, though not always of its risks.

Although there is clear overlap between some of the "methodological" contributions and some of the "theoretical" contributions, we thought that it makes sense to divide them into two sections in the book.

Part One of the book includes six contributions on research methodology. Because it was one of the first major traditions in empirical inquiry in the country, we begin with the two contributions on cross-cultural psychological measurement. In his chapter, Peter du Preez investigates three hypotheses on South African psychology: (1) To what extent is it a product of apartheid? (2) To what extent is South African psychology unified in its approach and assumptions? (3) Has it succeeded in coming to terms with the cultural diversity of South African society? In response to the first question, Du Preez suggests that the organisation of South African psychology is indeed a product of apartheid, but that its major assumptions, including some Eurocentric and racist assumptions, are typical of western psychology. As far as the second question is concerned, it is suggested that South African psychology is not unified and exhibits the diversity, though on a smaller scale, of western psychology. Finally, in answer to the third question, Du Preez argues that the cross-cultural response to cultural diversity should be developed into a fully fledged cultural

psychology. This theme is illustrated by referring to the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition as well as to later developments in cultural psychology.

In his overview of psychological measurement, Claassen discusses some of the major methodological issues in cross-cultural measurement. He initially locates this problem within the larger context of cross-cultural understanding and issues of ethnocentrism. In his overview of cross-cultural psychological measurement in South Africa, which focuses on the work done at the National Institute for Personnel Research and the Human Sciences Research Council, he shows how issues of test bias, culture-free items and comparability continue to plague research in this area. He concludes that researchers working in this area, have to take the multi-culturalism of South African society seriously and attempt to develop tests that take this factor into account. The search for culture-free tests is a futile one.

Dawie Stoker's chapter on sampling addresses two main issues. In the first two sections, he discusses some of the key concepts and methodological problems that typically arise in survey research. He also refers briefly to some of the ways in which these issues have been addressed in sampling theory, for example, the introduction of complex sampling methods and the asosciated question of design effects. A few case studies from South Africa are discussed in the second part of the chapter.

In the first review of this area, Johann Louw discusses the main features and trends in programme evaluation studies in South Africa. His review covers different approaches to evaluation, the various fields of application, the history of the "field", as well as issues regarding training and future priorities. Louw is particularly concerned about the lack of integration and a critical mass in the field. He is, at the same time, optimistic that the growing demand for evaluation research (which is evident in most areas) will ensure further growth and, hopefully, increased sophistication in evaluation research and practice.

Nel and Hill's chapter on geographical information systems is a valuable contribution to this volume, not only because of its review of the development and application of GIS in South Africa, but also because they argue very strongly for the interdisicplinary value of GIS. Their chapter covers the origins of GIS, its main features and the various areas of application. It then moves on to focus on the local scene. Although the authors are generally impressed with the utilization of GIS in a wide range of sectors, they are concerned about the lack of concerted and well-financed academic research in this area and therefore, also about the long-term future of GIS.

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Economic history/political economy in South Africa: An assessment

William M. Freund

Introduction

The scope of this chapter is initially to be defined as the field of economics but I am going to establish that definition in a somewhat unconventional way. Our department is the only self-standing department of economic history in South Africa (there is also one at the University of Zimbabwe) and economic history is more of an interdisciplinary field than a genuine discipline with a distinctive methodology.

Economic history was established in this country, following a British model, in consequence of the limitations of history departments which used to concentrate narrowly on political history. However, the first economic history taught in South Africa was created within the UCT Economics Department. In the past thirty years, the purview of historians has substantially widened to the point where political history is no longer in a dominant position within the discipline while methodologies used by historians have become extremely varied. However, the dominant trends today in history reflect the current

interest in culture and identity, and economic historians overseas are apt to feel marginal in history departments.

Moreover, economics as a discipline has found it difficult to absorb economic history except by converting it into case studies of applications of economic theories and laws to the past – a diverting but in the end fairly sterile way of understanding economic development. Economics remains too normative and too determined to be accepted as a "science" to absorb the theoretical and descriptive scope of economic history without stultifying it. Thus the case being made here is for economic history as the study of economic development in concrete historical terms using the varied tools of the historian – as much or more than the specialized analysis of economists – which rarely are applicable to historical subjects or those where specific factors cannot be isolated for precise identification and analysis. This pursuit is not easily categorized as a sub-field of history or economics and is awkwardly integrated into these disciplines.

Methodological approaches might be listed as follows:

1   Rigorous and critical analysis of written documents from state and non-state sources

2   Sophisticated and critical use of non-written material

3   Analysis of economic and sociological indicators

4   Creation of historical and structural analyses from economic data

5   .Effective use of information technology

6   Mastery of relevant languages and other sources of knowledge such as maps

7   Development of capacity through widespread and critical reading to make judgements based on comparison and models

Apart from engaging some individuals situated in history or economics departments, economic history understood in these terms

an be said to be under consideration in politics, sociology and particularly in human) geography departments in South Africa and elsewhere. It seems useful moreover at this juncture to expand our definition of economic history to take in assessments of the present and, as such, the term *political economy* may be the more useful. (Some might prefer development studies but that seems to me to invite a much wider range of issues for study.) I would defend this area of enquiry, awkwardly sited within the current range of formally constituted disciplines, as a crucial one for academic activity, particularly in a country experiencing substantial social change and seeking a new orientation with strong developmental implications. For a more recent and extensive assessment that moves on from this paper in the direction of intellectual assessment of the economic history field, see Freund, 1995.

The burden of the past

Some of the most important problems that are experienced in advancing the study of political economy in South Africa are general to the social sciences. It is not surprising that the situation in social science research here is different from that in the richest and most developed countries. However, the social sciences are in a poor position even by the standard of most countries comparable to South Africa in terms of per capita GNP or the overall size of the GNP, for instance, the principal Latin American countries. In those countries, the imperatives of development and the problematic nature of the state have for generations led an intelligentsia to explore the social sciences as the key to national understanding. In South Africa, it will be argued that, while we have a small and interesting community of scholars who have in somewhat parallel way explored the problems of racism and inequality, their international interest and reputation is largely confined to Africanist circles − in the sense of those who define their interests as largely confined to the continent of Africa − and there is a lack of broader methodological and theoretical sophistication.

Moreover, it is a small community. The social sciences (and, more generally, subjects that do not immediately prepare one for a career, are stepchildren at our universities and the relevant academic departments very small by international standards. Unsophisticated structures encourage lecturers to define themselves in terms of a discipline, rather than try to create new and more challenging curricula based on other criteria than "capturing" students for particular departments. Internal academic debates are few and limited, and have in the past generally and obviously been fuelled more by politics than the issues at hand. In my view, nurturing a different consciousness will be a demanding and long-term but essential and potentially rewarding task. Nonetheless, within this general problematic, it is probably fair to say that the study of South African and regional history and political economy represents a relative strength.

South Africa before 1948, or perhaps before 1960, could be said to have been fortunate in the way it engaged the attention of distinguished academics interested in social and economic development. The contribution of the two greatest figures in "liberal" historiography, W.M. Macmillan and C.W. de Kiewiet as well as the greatest Afrikaans language historian, P.J. van der Merwe, was outstanding. One might also mention the inspiratory role played by H.M. Robertson at UCT, the historical insight of the economist S.H. Frankel, the broad intellectual range of Sheila van der Horst, the insights of Jack and Ray Simons trying directly to address revolutionary activists. In this period, South African universities supported only a tiny number of historians and social scientists. Given that, the wide-ranging and critical nature of work on economic and social development in this country was not unimpressive. It was backed up by a significant number of less theoretically interesting but well-researched monographic literature, for example the well-known *Natal Regional Survey*-series. High calibre work of far-reaching character thinned out from the 1950s and clearly presented too much that was unwelcome to the government of the day. More narrowly

laced studies carried on longer but also tended to peter out from the late 1960s; some continued under commissioned and private auspices.

What happened? From the end of the 1950s, two principal developments occurred in this field of study. First, outstanding academics to an unprecedented extent found the intellectual environment of the country so unpropitious to change, and the climate so hostile to wide-ranging discussion of serious issues, that they tended to emigrate. At this very time, the "golden age" of post-war Western capitalism was reaching its heyday and the universities in countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia were tremendous beneficiaries, so the pull factor attracting South Africans to English-language universities elsewhere in the world was equally strong. In South African universities, the impact of emigration, increasingly buttressed by the academic boycott, was very significant although difficult to quantify or pinpoint. Certainly, South African universities continued to contain scholars who wrote about the history of particular sectors or aspects of the economy, but the narrowness and the isolation from international models of development as they changed is apparent.

Second, when academic activity in this area revived, it was inspired by the desire to take apart the apartheid system intellectually as thoroughly as possible. The so-called revisionists of the 1970s were either exiles and émigrés such as Harold Wolpe, Martin Legassick and Stan Trapido or foreigners such as Frederick Johnstone and, rather later, Stan Greenberg, John Cell and George Frederickson. In the 1970s, South Africans with these interests went off to Sussex, Warwick and London to drink from the wellsprings that had run dry at home. Paradoxically it was during a hiatus when the political opposition in South Africa was weak and there was little pressure on intellectuals to cleave to a particular line of analysis that this new scholarship took off and was most creative.

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The revisionists made an important contribution in the study of a number of key areas. They took up a wide range of subjects or questions relating to labour, particularly labour history. These included, but were hardly confined to, the subject of *worker organization* (cf. Hirson, 1989; Lewis, 1984). This was the subject of the first History Workshop book to appear. The new unions, legally registered in the wake of the Wiehahn Commission after 1979, were an important touchstone for this fairly wide-ranging thrust in scholarship. To a lesser and somewhat slower extent, radicals took up *agrarian history* (cf. Beinart *et al.* 1986) at least from the point of view of social conflicts and differentiation. Almost inevitably, however, this required scholars, especially of the calibre of William Beinart, to take up the economics of different farming systems and the relationship of human actors to the changing, and in some ways fragile, natural environment.

Theoretically, and pinioned around the key fact that South African prosperity seemed to be defying the gloomy prophecies of the anti-apartheid liberals in the 1960s, the revisionists raised the issue of class in a new, if rather unqualified, way as a means of comprehending South African social realities. Class was taken to be intimately linked to the question of the state, which promoted the interests of either groupings of whites as a class or simply, the bourgeoisie.[1] Even when obtrusive Marxist theory irritated liberal critics, provoking debate (the *radical-liberal or race-class debate*), it was the radicals who really set the terms of the debate. A work such as Lipton, 1986, often seen as the most thorough defence of the liberal position, exemplifies this situation and concedes much to the radical critique. Perhaps one should also signal the work of social scientists such as Teddy Brett, Gavin Williams, Robin Cohen and Geoff Lamb, who left South Africa and successfully produced critical and radical studies of economy and society elsewhere in Africa.

All of this work had an object: the demystification and destabilization of the South African state and, with that state, the

system more generally. Radical analysis used economic history as a means of social critique to expose the pretensions of the state and to reveal gross forms of exploitation and dispossession, using the battery of critical ammunition that typifies radical scholarship internationally (Marxist class analysis, dependency theory). It was not work concerned with social and economic solutions beyond "the end of apartheid". Even when certain scholars had other things to say as well, those insights tended to get less attention – for example Stanley Trapido in his suggestive and pathbreaking 1971 article on the South African road to capitalism via the alliance of gold and maize, (Trapido, 1971).

It was a mark of the unusual and transitional character of what I would call the late, or reform, apartheid state in the 1980s that, whereas the exciting work in this arena had at first been done in Britain especially – and certainly overseas – for a long time, it became possible for this kind of analysis to pervade the English language social science departments within the country. Indeed, arguably university students by the 1980s who studied economic history and aligned subjects were presented with radical political economy as a dominant paradigm. I would like to insist that, while what follows is intended to critique the limitations of this model, it is still a powerful one with much to teach us about how South Africa developed and continues to be structured, despite changes at the level of the state, and it imbeds many important ideas that remain fertile. The social sciences cannot afford to abandon their role as critics because the current democratic state is more acceptable.

The Analysis Research in the Human Sciences agenda asks us to consider the problems inherent in bias associated with the apartheid era for the study of the subjects we are taking up. I do not believe that bias, associated with the defence of the apartheid system in any way, is a serious issue in looking at how political economy has been taught and researched in the English language universities in recent times. However, in our new context, it is significant that such a bias does

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exist in highly important institutional settings which took their marching orders from the state and were not willing or able to function in a critical capacity. An example might be the dualist model of the economy, interpreted to define the Bantustans as separate economies and polities, in the thinking of the Development Bank of South Africa.[2] In practice, how to replace existing operational models of thinking in applied and policy analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, is an important task to be taken up.

However, moving from state-aligned institutions to the sphere of ideas, the real problem we are addressing in the new political context is not the absence of critical studies of economic history or political economy but rather its blinkered orientation towards one particular critical direction where it was strong, accompanied by the neglect of many important questions that are now on the agenda in the post-apartheid era. I would emphasize the following points:

1   The need to shift from a scholarship of critique to a politics of engagement, albeit critical engagement, not simply "policy studies".

2   The need to build up a large, wide-ranging community of social scientists generally, bound up as is necessary in wider international networks.

3   Following from that, the need to strengthen institutions that would support transformation in 1) and 2).

4   Perhaps the need for policy studies allowing the critical insights that do exist to be translated into institutional operationality should also be marked.

The present scene

The economic historian in South Africa in 1995 has to confront research topics anew in the light of the big national questions as they appear in the post-apartheid setting. What are the parameters for

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bringing a better life to the newly enfranchised masses of the country who experience acute poverty, massive unemployment and one of the more extreme patterns of differential wealth in the world? How do people cope and what are their aspirations? How can they become skilled? What form has proletarianization taken in South Africa and where can it lead? What international situations resemble South Africa?

In an international comparison, South Africa's gross national product is comparable to that of Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Portugal or Malaysia rather than the rich countries which whites used to look to as models. Moreover, unlike most countries in this sort of bracket, the South African economy, while still bearing great wealth to successful businesses, has been virtually stagnant for a generation and average living standards have remained constant or have fallen. Moreover, South Africa's neighbours and natural trading partners are in general in much worse shape. Thus the question of development, of finding a suitable *growth path* within our particular political context, becomes fundamental in this light. Obviously this is a perspective where we can examine and re-examine labour, make use of agricultural historians' work, make use of concepts of class and re-evaluate the role of the state. However, economic historians also need to ask questions about the realities and potential of particular regions and cities, about household economies and the situation of women and young people, about the orientation and parameters of different categories of capitalists and their relationship to the state.

A development orientation means asking new questions and pursuing new research agendas. Scholars with a background in economic history and development studies were crucial in organizing the impressive *Industrial Strategy Project* (ISP) in conjunction with the University of Sussex and supported by European and Canadian assistance but based largely at the University of Cape Town. This project paid the equivalent of lecturer's salaries to individual researchers who produced, within rather strict time limits, thorough studies of sectors of the industrial economy of South Africa based on

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particular questions asked by the directors. Since there were more than a dozen studies, the cost was large, but I can attest from those that I have seen that the quality is high and creates the possibility, especially since most are to be published by the University of Cape Town Press, of qualitatively new levels of debate and discussion on the main structural characteristics and prospects of South African industry. This is quite a big leap in knowledge. I do not think that previously there was any general analysis of any South African manufacturing industry of any real quality. ISP studies such as economist Miriam Altman's *Tinker tailor, tailor's son: Developing the South African clothing industry*, contain a mix of economic and social analysis and an important comparative dimension that shows awareness of the broader trends in the global economy. This is an industry which employs large numbers of South Africans, notably South African women, but much of its prosperity has been based on heavy protection by the state against international competition, which may no longer be possible to sustain in the new international trading order. I was pleased that one participant, Rod Crompton, submitted a version of his essay in my department for a master's degree. The quality was so outstanding that it has now been resubmitted and accepted for a Ph.D. in slightly modified form (Crompton, 1994). Crompton was unable to locate a single analytical article on the history and character of the South African chemical industry although there are some valuable analyses done on commission for the state or the private sector and available at vast sums. His thesis could put the study of this industry on an entirely new plane and his many provocative ideas on its future could stimulate a host of debates.

The ISP administrators have propagated their views in a number of challenging articles and these have had a major influence in the framing of the Macro-Economic Research Group (MERG) report and, beyond that, the RDP documents, which call for the development of (or return to) an industrial policy in South Africa. There is a great deal more to say on this issue, which needs to be a permanent fixture of

study and analysis. There is a need for a whole community of scholars to engage with these and other developmental issues, whether sympathetic or not to the particular perspective in the ISP project.

Previous work that has pointed to the social constraints and meaning of industrial development in South Africa has been limited if interesting. Bozzoli's initial study on the emerging nationalist concerns of early twentieth century South African manufacturers stands alone as a study of the culture of South African capitalists (Bozzoli, 1981). The American Nancy Clark's Yale Ph.D. on the history of the parastatals, now out in revised form as a book (Clark, 1994), should be a milestone that will replace a host of scattered articles. Renfrew Christie's important study of electrification (Christie, 1984) could be a departure for further studies of energy and its economic ramifications. There needs to be far more work of this kind.

Business history also has an important part to play. Most business history, apart from a few harsh denunciations of the mining complex such as Duncan Innes' *Anglo* (Innes, 1984) and the American William Minter's *King Solomon's Mines Revisited* (Minter, 1986), largely consists of privately sponsored and necessarily rather uncritical in-house publications. We need more all-embracing, scholarly and critical studies that take on board theoretical ideas from overseas, looking at business from the perspective of economic development, and we need to encourage businesses – as well as other non-state actors in the economy, such as trade unions – to leave their papers to universities and other public repositories.

The international dimension is crucial. South African universities have not yet become places where a community of people work who study the entire world, as opposed merely to local specialists. The exceptions based here tend to feel isolated. South Africa ought logically to become the home, or at least one of the main homes, for the study of economic and social development throughout Africa by many specialists who grasp the wider African picture. Institutions like

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the Africa Institute need to be transformed and put to use for the entire academic community.

I would like to suggest therefore that we need to support a climate of academic opinion in South Africa concerned with economic development in its broadest sense. This cannot be left to economics departments, although they do contain some individuals with a strong developmental interest (very few, however, with any grasp of historical factors). The application of positivist economic criteria, definable in isolates, is not sufficient. Those economists who have no use for history or "externalities" and think that the eternal verities of the market are universally applicable in all times and places, are difficult for development specialists and economic historians to work with. While mastery of old and new economic techniques needs to be more widely diffused, the broader problems of development require the use of a large kitbag of methodologies, qualitative as well as quantitative, and serious attention to such disciplines as geography, history and anthropology. Present development problems need to be studied in the light of the past, particularly because of the larger vision and the judgement that this can bring forth. A large community of relevant academics is needed to support this kind of activity and make its internal byways come to life. There is a need for quality periodical literature and perhaps a relevant learned society.[3] South Africans need to develop a core of experts on other developing countries and their problems, notably in the remainder of Africa, and to work closely with other Africans in research on political economy more generally.

The ARHS specifically requests participants to comment on the application of the natural sciences to this field of study. The most obvious perhaps lies in what we could broadly call environmental studies, which are essential if we concern ourselves with the challenge of land reform and the assessment of agrarian history. The strength of conservation-orientated studies and observation-linked biological studies in South Africa, some of which are very highly rated internationally, can potentially be tapped here. In addition, however,

the study of economic change is increasingly being linked to analyses of changing technology and the prospects for increasing productivity. The relationship with the physical sciences is difficult for social scientists to establish but there are possibilities for mutually beneficial research, especially if we can come together with applied concerns.

Paper presenters are also being asked to consider the funding implications of change in the field that they are considering in their essays. I would suggest that there are two real necessities here:

1   The development of funding, perhaps in conjunction with the private sector, for particular projects, such as the ISP project, which can be evaluated as having a high developmental content that will enrich national debates and policy initiatives. Such projects could be initiated by the state or other public bodies or by scholars, based on their own motivations, and be evaluated in a transparent manner.

2   The continued need for support in moulding and transforming the institutional environment in which social science and humanities practitioners work. The highly valuable applied work can only come out of well-grounded, well-staffed general education and a broader community of intellectual activity which will inevitably include less immediately practical thinkers, and out of which more obviously relevant policy debates and applied research can grow. We need to agitate for a higher education context which will preserve these values and offer something to a broader transformation project at the same time.

Endnotes

1   In the 1980s, however, and especially in association with the Johannesburg History Workshop, class was increasingly defined in terms of "community" and culture. In a slightly later phase, it began to be neglected or discarded entirely with some of the main achievements of the revisionists denigrated. Regretfully political economy and history began to go their separate ways, with most historians attending more and more to identity and culture as dominant issues.

2 By dualism, I mean the view that there is a developed "First World" economy which can serve as a universal model for more benighted traditional economies and which fails to theorize and understand the relationship between them. This view, which was acceptable to many liberal critics of political apartheid, was far more widespread than economic concepts which might directly have defended the political *status quo*. Thus the DBSA accepted the idea until very recently that the Bantustans really were fledgling underdeveloped countries with distinct economies, even if it did not necessarily support any particular political dispensation with regard to them.

3 My attempts to make the Economic History Society a vehicle for this kind of thinking have unfortunately been hindered; it would be an excellent platform, giving discipline to economic history in this country.

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understanding of subjectivity which neither workerists nor Charterists have understood. They write,

> Our rethinking of political subjectivity embraces three dimensions: the historicisation and contextualisation of the process of subject formation; the possibility of thinking political subjectivity as an overdetermination or condensation of different subject positions; the idea of subjectivity emerging in the space between, as Laclau has suggested, the undecidable structure and the decision (Norval and Howarth, 1992:23).

It is this notion of subject constitution which Norval seems to equate with identity formation, that provides the common thread in all of her papers. Thus in the 1993 Rhodes Conference paper (Norval, 1993a) she is centrally concerned with the constructed nature of race and ethnicity. But, she argues, that although most theorists would today acknowledge this notion of constructedness, they all cling to some "objective" ground outside the discursive, like material interests, the economic and so on. Norval suggests that there is in fact no ground outside discursive constitution to which to turn in order to explain the role of race and ethnicity. What is needed instead is an explanation of the process of identification which makes these "imaginaries" possible, an explanation to be found in Lacan.

Unfortunately, Norval never supplies us with any detailed explanation except to say that all identities and communities require the positing of an "other". The "positing of an other is what allows for the closure that facilitates the individuation; ... the 'centering' of a particular identity" (Norval, 1994a:121). This she illustrates with reference to the logic of Afrikaner nationalism (Norval, 1993b). She continues by suggesting that in fact the current discourse of the new South African nation is in danger of repeating this identitarian logic. The people cannot and must not embody the universal, but should keep open the space of identification. For Norval this conceptualiza-

tion is possible because both nation-building discourse and apartheid belong to what she terms the legacy of Western metaphysics and its grand narratives (1994a). As such, the logic of apartheid discourse and that of nation-building discourse share the same identitarian logic at the heart of Western metaphysics.

Assessment

The overall impression is that, at present, the "second-generation" post-Marxists (Laclau and Mouffe's students) have been less than successful in retaining the rigour of their mentors. Notable is the general paucity of the arguments in regard to South Africa, and the constant references to and outlines of future arguments which are then simply never made. Furthermore, the applications we do have seem 'thin' in the end, adding little by way of explanatory capacity or detailed insight, which may be both a theoretical failing internal to the project as well as a result of the ever-present "radical democratic" political agenda. As Zizek suggests, Laclau and Mouffe provide for some important developments, but they do not really advance on Althusser's notion of interpellation as subject formation, and may in fact be conflating subject, subject constitution, subject position, and identity (Zizek, 1990).

In addition to particular problems with the kind of position to which Zizek is alluding, it is surely necessary to ask a wider question as to what the character of post-Marxist work in South Africa might be expected to be. If it is legitimate to object to the fact that local post-Marxist research does not really progress beyond the critical commentary of Hudson (however insightful that might be) and the rarefied and finally unsatisfying of work Norval, to what do we attribute this state of affairs?

Is the problem confined to South African work or do similar problems emerge internationally? Peter Hudson (1986) himself makes some

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useful points in this direction which suggest that problems with post-Marxism are not unique to South Africa.

In reacting to what they see as the reductionist and determinist conception of history and society by classical Marxists, post-Marxists produce a social world of such complexity that one is tempted to say that it resists explanation altogether, at least of the traditional kind. Certainly where the social world is described in terms of, for example, the "gap at the heart of the subject", "infinite difference" and "arbitrariness", a great deal rests on the establishment of discursive hegemony or on Lacan's nodal *points de caption*. Without the operation of what is hegemonic, the world in which post-Marxists think is not the one most people actually inhabit.

The social world most of us recognize and experience is one in which signs are far from arbitrary and languages, for the most part, communicate fairly effectively. What is more, in this world egos have identity and some groups clearly have more power or access to the world's resources than others. Unless we are happy to abandon explanation altogether, we need to ask (with Hudson, 1986) what explains the success or failure of specific discursive formations, what are the key nodal points and why they arise or disappear. If existing social identities constitute points of resistance, what helps them to resist and under what conditions do they fail ? Perhaps it is because the answers to questions of this kind are not forthcoming that post-Marxist thought proves so difficult to apply, not only in South Africa.

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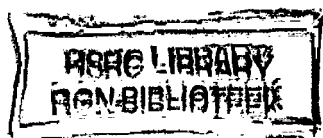
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Post-colonialism in South African social science

Windsor S. Leroke

Introduction

This report is organized around the following central question: What is the status of post-colonialism in contemporary social sciences in South Africa? Related to this main question are the following questions: What constitutes post-colonialism in the South African social sciences? When was post-colonialism introduced and defined in South Africa? Who are the practitioners of post-colonialism? What defines post-colonialism in South Africa? Is there a consciousness of post-colonial research in South Africa? Is post-colonialism a movement in South Africa? Who is involved in post-colonial research in South Africa? Who has used the term post-colonialism, and how does it differ from other usages outside of South Africa?

Post-colonialism: Precursors and inspirations

The historical emergence of post-colonialism is directly linked to the struggles against colonialism and oppression in most parts of the so-called Third World. Post-colonialism was made possible by anti-colonial discourses that preceded it. These discourses, in their various forms, sought to articulate the experiences of those who were colonized and oppressed. Anti-colonial discourses were put forth, in

Africa, for example, by diverse writers/activists such as Frantz Fanon (psychiatrist),[1] Leopold Sedar Senghor (poet),[2] Cheikh Anta Diop (historian),[3] Albert Memmi,[4] Amilcar Cabral (activist),[5] Aime Cesaire (poet),[6] Walter Rodney (historian).[7] The focus of their critique was colonialism and its effects on the lives of the colonized. Thus, their critique tended to be external; it was directed at the colonialists. It is on this point that post-colonialism differs from anti-colonial discourses, in that its criticism is largely internal.

Thus, anti-colonial discourses contained the seeds of post-colonialism. However, post-colonialism could only emerge and develop after the experience of colonialism. Like anti-colonial discourses, it has been formulated and practised by those who are of Third World origin.[8] Still, it is developed by professional activists, who question the relationship between theory and practice.[9]

However, it was after the demise of colonialism that post-colonialism was given a clear formulation. Post-colonialism is a reflection on the post-colonial situation in Africa, for example. Thus, it locates its critique inside the internal conditions of the independent countries. Its proponents include diverse writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong,[10] Valentine Mudimbe,[11] Anthony Kwame Appiah,[12] Edward Said,[13] Homi Bhabha,[14] Christopher Miller,[15] Trinh T. Minh-ha,[16] Gayatri Spivak[17] and Pauline Houtoundji.[18] As such, post-colonialism means different things to these writers. However, what all have in common is a critical rethinking of present Third World conditions. In this sense, post-colonialism becomes a reconstructive project.

In its early forms, post-colonialism was articulated through psychoanalysis and the philosophical position of existentialism. This was particularly the case with the work that Fanon produced. However, it later became reformulated through the works of Michel Foucault (Said, Mudimbe, Miller), Jacques Derrida (Spivak, Bhabha), Jacques Lacan (Bhabha), Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard. Thus, post-colonialism is a configuration of these diverse theoretico-

philosophical developments in contemporary social theory, an offshoot, if you will, of what in some circles is called post-modernism.

The precursors of post-colonialism were mainly activists. Through their writings they contributed to the decolonization of Africa. Anti-colonial discourses were significant in that they convincingly argued for the importance of Africa, in the formation of the modern world. Their various theses sought to de-marginalize the global position of Africa. It is this main theme that the post-colonialists take and develop. Of the many influential precursors to the emergence of post-colonialism, Fanon has emerged as the dominant figure.[19] Thus, I will briefly discuss the work of Fanon. Fanon worked through psycho-analysis to develop a critique of identity in the colonial context. But it was a critique borne out of participation in social struggle. The critique that Fanon advances is both microscopic and macroscopic. Micro-scopically, it is a critique of colonialism in Algeria (*Black skin, white masks*), and more generally, it is a critique of colonialism in other parts of Africa (*The wretched of the earth*). However, it is through the analysis of colonial relations that Fanon is at his best, and this is clearly demonstrated through the deployment of psychoanalytic and existential concepts in his classic, *Black skin, white masks*.

Post-colonialism has brought to the foreground issues of identity, gender, race, ethnicity, writing, representation, orality, difference, marginality, multiplicity and heterogeneity. Post-colonialism positions itself as a critique of issues of totality, unity and sameness. It emerges as a critique of Enlightenment ideas and views.

In some instances, post-colonialism is an articulation of the historical relationship that exists between Third World and First World countries.[20] The articulation seeks to outline ways in which these countries are mutually interdependent in the globalization process.[21] But it is a problematic interdependence.

The emergence of post-colonialism was motivated by the independence of most Third World countries in the post-war period.

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Post-colonialism emerged in the context of politically independent countries. However, unlike the previous anti-colonial discourse, post-colonialism was to provide an internal critique of the independent Third World and the relationship that it has with the First World. It came to question the viability of certain socio-economic, cultural and intellectual developments within the Third World. What is distinctive about post-colonialism is that it is not an economic critique, or political critique in a narrow sense. Its political critique is broad. In fact, the politics of post-colonialism are embedded in the critique that it makes of post-colonial conditions in the Third World.

What is post-colonialism in South Africa?

Post-colonialism is one of the intellectual currents to emerge in recent years in South Africa. However, it has not fully emerged yet. In its embryonic form, it is emerging through disparate research projects that have in common an attempt to rejuvenate social scientific research. In this context it thus contends, in the human and social sciences, with postmodernism, feminism, post-Marxism, and post-structuralism. In fact, these recent intellectual approaches have, for the first time in South Africa, initiated the development of interdisciplinary research, seminars, and conferences. We must note that the emergence of these intellectual projects in South Africa is evidently shaped and formulated within the context of new intellectual trends that are taking place overseas. Further, post-colonialism in South Africa is not an intellectual movement, or a set of social institutions and practices. It does not have a social organization. Within the context of the South African social sciences, it is emerging as a critical research "project", even though there is no single research project that characterizes post-colonialism.

In what ways is post-colonialism specific in South Africa? First, let us note that the *post-* in the South African post-colonialism (in the social sciences) is not the same as the *post-* in international post-colonialism, post-modernism, post-structuralism, and post-moder-

nity.[22] The post- of the South African post-colonialism is not inscribed with reference to the period after colonialism. It is not even formulated with the memory of colonialism. Nor does it have a relationship with colonialism. Further, it is not a moment of overcoming, of going beyond the past (colonialism). Rather, the *post-*, in this instance, refers to *an attempt to articulate new research questions and concerns within the limits of mainstream social sciences*. The *post-* is a moment of critical questioning, engagement, and the *opening up of new research possibilities in social research*. It is a moment that seeks to shift the boundaries of intellectual discourse in the social sciences. It is only in this respect that international post-colonialism has led to the emergence of post-colonialism in South Africa.

Thus, through the term post-colonialism, in the South Africa context, one begins to define the appropriation of questions and research concerns that have been articulated in international post-colonialism. As a result of the specific character of South Africa, post-colonialism emerges through a process of selective appropriation of similar themes (difference, multiplicity, marginality, heterogeneity, discourse, other, power/knowledge, among others). However, this appropriation is conducted with the sole aim of attempting to shift intellectual debates and research from certain concerns to new and innovative interests. It is an appropriation which is made possible by the fact that our modernity is what we share with other modernities.

As a result of this selective appropriation, a change in the meaning of the term post-colonialism takes place. The questions take on a different form. The same applies to the issues of politics, representation, canonicity, writing, orality and knowledge, for example. That is, local post-colonialism, as a specific variant of post-colonialism, is not a mirror image of international post-colonialism. However, both have in common the theme of shifting-away from mainstream intellectual positions, not to undermine what is being done but to introduce and articulate new perspectives in the production of knowledge.

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However, I should express the caveat that post-colonialism in the South African social sciences is an emerging paradigm. Post-colonialism in South Africa is not a clearly formulated intellectual project. Thus, it is not an intellectual position. This is partly due to the fact that its emergence is taking place within academic institutions that currently operate within intellectual trends that post-colonialism is critical of. Its emergence in the South African social sciences is not following the same route as it did overseas. There is no one particular individual or group of individuals who are collectively involved in the formulation of post-colonialism. Therefore, the report that follows on post-colonialism in the South African social sciences is based on an attempt to outline the disparate character of the work that is being conducted on the margins of mainstream social science.

Post-colonial approaches

Post-colonialism in South Africa is a specific manner of posing certain critical questions in the social sciences. At present, it is emerging as a critique of predominantly Marxist-oriented social science.[23] In a sense, the majority of those who are involved in the emergence of post-colonialism are non-Marxists.[24] These criticisms of Marxism are developed in the context of the international crisis of Marxist theory.[25] It is this specific crisis, a crisis that is simultaneously linked to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, that has begun the search for different theoretical alternatives in social theory. In South Africa, post-colonialism is one such a reflection.

In this sense, post-colonialism emerges as a mixture of other "posties".[26] It becomes an attempt to address some specific questions of the social sciences in South Africa. These are questions of the practice of social research (Who researches whom? Who writes about whom? Who is the other in the practice of social research? Who speaks in research texts? Who appropriates research knowledge, and for what purposes?);[27] and questions of identity (what processes led to the construction of identities? How do identities change in various social

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contexts? What relationship exists between various identities? Is there a single identity that embraces other identities, or is social life conditioned by a multiplicity of identities?). It is as an attempt to address these and other questions that post-colonialism operates with a diversity of other "posties".

The research projects of post-colonialism are of diverse scope, and usually interdisciplinary. They are from the disciplines of Geography, History, Sociology and Anthropology, among others. Through these disciplines, there is a cross-section of themes: space, time, narrativity, identity, translation, construction, representation, knowledge production/construction, orality, writing and social research. However, at the moment its emergence is largely taking place within historically white universities (HWUs). The research work that has been produced is, unfortunately, as yet diverse and fragmented.

Epistemological issues in post-colonialism

What is the epistemology of post-colonialism? How does it conduct social research? What are the assumptions that underlie its approach to social research? Who writes? Who is the researcher? Who is the object of research? What conditions determine a specific object of research? Who gets included/excluded in the process of social research, and of writing?

The epistemological assumption of post-colonialism is that the (post-)colonial experience and others (identities) are different and somehow distinct. They are different from metropolitan identities. Thus, at the core of post-colonialism is a systematic concern to explore the question of identity, and this has received various names, such as the *other, subaltern, alterity, hybridity and marginality*. The focus on identity has been to highlight the issue of difference within post-colonial conditions. The other is either simple, stable, unitary, mute, silent, or is complex, characterized by multiplicity, hybridity, multiple identities, and different ways of writing and speaking. In most cases, it

is the knowledge of the other that gives post-colonialism its intellectual distinctiveness – the other as gender, ethnicity, youth, workers, social movements; the other as a marginal social group; the other as excluded from participation in mainstream social activities. Post-colonialism has a fascination with the other. It can be said to be the study of otherness.

However, within this context, post-colonialism seeks to move away from the dualism of subject/object.[28] Post-colonialism accepts the tension that is involved in this dualism. In South Africa, post-colonialism reflects this tension, too.[29] The South African experience is highlighted by the fact that the other takes on a specific racial character. The other is mostly black, and the researcher is mostly white. This is the tension that is under discussion in post-colonialism.[30]

Like mainstream social science, the epistemology of post-colonialism is developed through conventional social research methods of interviews, observations, life histories, oral history and archival research. The difference, however, is in the questions that post-colonialism asks in the research process. In this manner, post-colonialism attempts to reconstruct the research agenda of mainstream social science.

What has been done? Application, usefulness, and limitations

The focus of this section is on those studies that have explicitly embraced the basic tenets of post-colonialism, even without operating with the term itself. The section examines the ways in which these studies engage and develop themes and issues in post-colonialism.

The kind of work that has been done at this stage in post-colonialism can be divided into two areas: empirical and conceptual/theoretical. These are the areas around which post-colonialism is likely to develop. On the empirical level, the projects include geography and feminism,[31] feminism and research,[32] anthropology and space,[33]

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Post-Marxism in South Africa: Some provisional observations

Andreas Bertoldi and Susan van Zyl

Introduction

The first problem that confronts even the briefest survey of post-Marxism in South Africa is that of definition. Clearly in a broad sense a number of social or political theorists, if not all since the death of Marx, are "Post-Marxists". However, interpreting the phrase in this sense- would clearly be absurd. As a preliminary move towards narrowing down the meaning of the term we have chosen to confine the term Post-Marxist only to those projects which take the work of Marx himself as their starting points and which therefore engage directly, albeit critically, with ingredients essential to Marx's own project.

In fact the term Post-Marxist has, to all intents and purposes, been partially defined for us. In current political understanding the term, although applicable more broadly to a number of revisionist tendencies within Marxism, has generally become associated with the so-called "discourse-theoretical" work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

This approach, as the term "discourse-theoretical" itself suggests, draws much that is central to it from structural linguistics, especially

from some of the assumptions underlying the work of Saussure which have been developed by linguists and social theorists who would probably describe themselves as post-structuralist. What the term does not suggest, however, is the equally important part played by psychoanalysis in post-Marxist thought.

As background to an understanding of the discourse-theoretical approach, it is necessary to point out that much of the social theory of the late 1960s and early 1970s centres on an important attempt to construct a synthesis between Marxism and psychoanalysis. The primary sources of this attempted synthesis are structuralist Marxism, structuralist anthropology and, perhaps most importantly, the psychoanalytic work of Lacan.

Probably the most significant figure in this enterprise is Althusser, whose paper "Freud and Lacon", published for the first time in 1964, entitled " must rate as a seminal contribution to the entire endeavour. Drawing on his own re-reading of Marx, as well as upon Lacan's singular appropriation of Freud, Althusser makes an important contribution to an understanding of the notion of ideology, an aspect to which he will return in his central work *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses* (1970). For Althusser the crucial aspect of Lacan's reading of Freud is its structuralist and anti-humanist emphasis and the centrality of the role which language plays in an attempt to understand what has commonly become known as "subject constitution". In fact, it is true to say that one of the most distinctive features of post-Marxist thought has been this question of the constitution of the subject and the accompanying shift towards a more sophisticated theory of ideology, that is, towards a theory which no longer relegates questions concerning the understandings of the subject to the sphere of "false consciousness". One might even argue that the notion of "discourse", and the central position it now occupies in contemporary human science thought, is derived from Althusser's early work and .

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that post-Marxism continues to owe much that is distinctive of its project to Althusser.

Historically, and in the international context, the work of Laclau and Mouffe must be seen as a reaction to the emergence of the new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, movements which they believe cannot be accounted for in the class (reductionist) terms of classical Marxism. In addition, the nature and failure of "really-existing" socialist societies (e.g. USSR) were, for Laclau and Mouffe, indicative of the fundamentally totalitarian character of classical Marxism specifically and "Western metaphysics" more generally. The conceptual position they adopted in response to this perceived crisis is derived, as has been implied, from Althusser but also from Saussure, Gramsci and the post-structuralism of Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida in particular.

For Laclau and Mouffe the growing complexity of contemporary social reality signals the end of the privileged position of the working class accorded to it by classical Marxism.

This proliferation of struggles presents itself, first of all, as a "surplus" of the *social vis-à-vis* the rational and organized structures of society — that is, of the social "order" ... the new forms of social conflict have also thrown into crisis theoretical political frameworks ... These correspond to the classical discourses of the Left, and the characteristic modes in which it has conceived the agents of social change, the structuring of political spaces, and the privileged points for the unleashing of historical transformations. What is now in crisis is a whole conception of socialism which rests upon the ontological centrality of the working class, upon the role of Revolution, with a capital 'r', as the founding moment in the transition from one type of society to another, and upon the illusory prospect of a perfectly unitary and homogeneous collective that will

render pointless the moment of politics (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:1-2).

In fact Laclau and Mouffe argue that at the time of the French Revolution a "radical mutation" had already taken place:

The decline of a form of politics for which the division of the social into two antagonistic camps is *an original and immutable datum, prior to all hegemonic construction*, and the transition towards a new situation, characterised by the essential instability of political spaces, in which the very identity of the forces in struggle is submitted to constant shifts, and calls for an incessant process of redefinition (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:151).

Put simply, a new hegemonic form of politics emerges, displacing the *a priori* status of "class struggle". Marx's notion of class, although correctly an identification of one form of social antagonism, is seen as problematic in its attempt to constitute itself as an opposition between only two antagonistic groupings, and thus as the fundamental principle of social/political division. For Laclau and Mouffe, Marx retains what they call the "Jacobin imaginary: the postulation of *one* foundational moment of rupture, and of a *unique* space in which the political is constituted" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:152). What is required, they argue, is a radical rethinking of these terms. As they write:

The rejection of privileged points of rupture and the confluence of struggles into a unified political space, and the acceptance, on the contrary, of the plurality and the indeterminacy of the social, seem to us the two fundamental bases from which a new political imaginary can be constructed, radically libertarian and infinitely more ambitious in its objectives than that of the classic left. This demands, in the first place, a description of the historical terrain in which it emerged, which is the field of what we shall call the "democratic revolution" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:152).

This notion of the "democratic revolution" is central to post-Marxist thought. At the outset post-Marxism argues that there are no *a priori* privileged agents, nor is there anything inevitable about resistance and struggle against power. Relations of subordination, that is, need not lead to resistance of a political character, which they define as "a type of action whose objective is the transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:153).

Simply, politics "as a practice of creation, reproduction and transformation of social relations cannot be located at a determinate level of the social, as the problem of the political is the problem of the institution of the social, that is, of the definition and articulation of social relations in a field criss-crossed with antagonisms" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:153).

In the place of Marx's basically binary class struggle, post-Marxists aim to identify different discursive conditions for the emergence of collective action. They ask how political identities are constituted, and how relations of oppression are constituted out of relations of subordination. Laclau and Mouffe suggest that the latter requires a "discursive exterior" which interrupts the discourse of subordination. This is the logic of equivalence that displaces the democratic discourse from the field of the political to the field of other discourse. But, as previously suggested, this logic of equivalence is possible only at a particular moment in history, namely the democratic revolution:

> ... it is only from the moment when the democratic discourse becomes available to articulate the different forms of resistance to subordination that the conditions will exist to make possible the struggle against different types of inequality.

> But in order to be mobilized in this way, the democratic principle of liberty and equality had to impose itself as the new matrix of the social imaginary; or, in our terminology, to constitute a fundamental nodal point in the construction of the

political. This decisive mutation in the political imaginary of Western societies took place two hundred years ago and can be defined in these terms: the logic of equivalence was transformed into the fundamental instrument of production of the social (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:154, 155).

However, if Laclau and Mouffe have made their position with respect to a number of Marx's central tenets and his periodization clear, this still leaves the question of political identities as an issue, and it is perhaps here that the influence of their work has been strongest.

To summarize their argument briefly, they support the following basic tenets of post-structuralism, namely the constitutive character of difference — there is no absolute centre, no point of departure, and the social is not a whole. In fact for post-Marxism the notion of "society in general" is not a legitimate object of discourse, as there is no underlying social unity but only various mechanisms of unification in operation.

In this "field" of mechanisms, the identity of social actors is a result of struggle (it behaves like a sign, specifically via connotation (Laclau, 1983:40). Therefore all social relations must be conceived of as articulations of differences, as signifying practices. This in turn suggests that the fundamental tenets of structural linguistics, especially the generation of meaning through difference and the arbitrariness of the sign, to the extent that they are valid for all signifying regimes are taken as also true for the social.

This means that it is not possible to refer the social order to some transcendent principle, and it is this which establishes the discursive nature of the social. "The impossibility of the object 'society' is founded upon the de-centred character of the social, in the ultimately arbitrary character of social relations" (Laclau, 1983:41). As a consequence the subject is always an articulation of not one but a number of subject positions, and the position of the subject is,

therefore, always only temporarily fixed. An apparent identity or nodal point (be it of a subject or group of subjects) is thus not the result of an essential defining property or principle but the result of what Laclau and Mouffe term a (particular) hegemonic practice.

Laclau's two principal early texts in this regard are *Transformations of advanced industrial societies and the theory of the subject* (1983), and *Psychoanalysis and Marxism* (1987), which reveal his early attempts at coming to terms with the Lacanian understanding of subject constitution in psychoanalytic terms. The importance of the 1987 paper derives from the fact that it links Lacanian psychoanalysis with a post-Marxist project, a project which Laclau's subsequent work has increasingly developed. Its important features are the understanding that the synthesis of Marxism and Lacanianism is not simply the product of the addition of a theory of subjectivity, but that the logic of the political itself allows for a dialogue between Marxism and psychoanalysis. Laclau, following Lacan, argues that we need to recognise the fundamental gap between the real and the senses of individual and social group actions, that is, the fundamental opacity of the social, a concept very different to the notion of the possibility of achieving transparency which he attributes to orthodox Marxism. In contrast the notion of a hegemonic subject assumes the category of lack, a departure point for a possible confluence. It is not a question of the addition of a theory of the subject, or the addition of a new causal element (for instance the Unconscious in the place of the economy), but:

... as the coincidence of the two, around the logic of the signifier as a logic of unevenness and dislocation, a coincidence grounded on the fact that the latter is the logic which presides over the possibility/impossibility of the constitution of *any* identity (Laclau, 1987:333).

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Post-Marxism and South Africa

With these general remarks by way of establishing the background, our central interest now concerns the question of post-Marxism and South Africa. It is here that we can see a relatively clear purpose behind the turn to post-Marxism, especially at this juncture.

Traditionally South Africa has been defined as a "racially-structured social formation" (Hall, 1980), in which the central theoretical problem was always the explanation of the co-existence of class and race. Hall suggests that we could define two broad tendencies, one economic (based on capitalism and class), the other sociological (based on race and ethnicity). Most often these debates have been presented as being between two 'camps', the Marxist and the liberal. However the more interesting theoretical debates have undoubtedly taken place on the "Left", not in the least because the agenda of national liberation has been so prominent (cf. Posel, 1983 for a survey of the debates between liberals and Marxists, and Wolpe, 1988 for a survey of the Marxist arguments).

The initial formulation of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC, which has its history in Comintern prescriptions of the 1920s, sought to argue for the primacy of race at the experiential level, while retaining at the same time the understanding of South Africa as a capitalist formation. As such, race and class in fact became merged in the theory of National Democratic Revolution – a theory that propounded a two stage conception of revolution, first national democratic revolution, then socialist revolution, the primary area of struggle being between "nations", coloniser and colonised. The assumption of the CST (Colonialism of a Special Type) thesis was that the position of the majority (blacks) corresponded to that of colonial subjects, albeit without the inter-continental spatial displacements. It was also along these lines that the "false consciousness" of the white working class was explained – this class conceived of as being blinded

as it were by the racially determined hierarchy in which they existed (cf. Hudson, 1986b, 1986c on these issues).

In his 1986 critique of Colonialism of a Special Type, the Freedom Charter, and the Theory of National Democratic Revolution, Peter Hudson begins to raise some important issues that will lead to the work of Laclau and Mouffe in a South African context. For Hudson, the argument that South Africa is a colonial society of a special type (i.e. imperialist bourgeois and exploited in the same national state) relies centrally on an argument about experience. In particular the question of experience is always construed in racial not class terms. Thus South Africa's social/economic structure (capitalism) causes racial identity to be the dominant form of political identity in South Africa. As Hudson writes:

> The constitution of racial subjectivity is explained as a consequence of the experience of racial difference and domination ... Racial subjectivity in South Africa is at once illusory and non-illusory — illusory because it conceals the class determination of racial domination in South Africa but veridical because it expresses the experience of these (objective) relations of racial oppression. Thus racial subjectivity cannot therefore be characterised as 'false consciousness' (Hudson, 1986c:30-31).

Hudson, following Brewster, Balibar and Hirst in typically Althusserian fashion, suggests that this conception of ideology is both empiricist and economistic because the capitalist economy is conceived of as itself determining the way in which it is perceived and experienced by social agents, and thus the identities of social agents are formed in relation to this experience. As a consequence class subjectivity is a "direct 'structural effect' imposed and acquired by experience" (Hudson, 1986a:31). This presupposes blank and empty subjects who are "filled" with this set of experiences and perceptions. This empiricist conception of the subject, Hudson suggests, assumes

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the existence of only one meaning and experience, an experience which is always immediate.

Even at this point Hudson suggests that the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) may provide some way forward, "by developing an analysis of the constitution of social identity which leans heavily on post-Saussurian discourse theory [and which] has underlined the impossibility of deriving from an agent's place in the relations of production his dominant 'subject-position'" (Hudson, 1986c:31). In particular, he suggests that such a post-Marxist conception might be able to account for the openness and fluidity of "the social" which classical Marxism seems to have difficulties with. In addition, such a conception would require the critical interrogation of any notion of "experience".

Privileging race over class, or vice versa, is unsustainable theoretically. Instead, what seems to be required is a method of thinking of multiple identities or subject positions – which is where the current turn to post-Marxism comes in.

In the 1970s a number of writers sought to develop a more complex understanding of apartheid and turned to the work of Althusser, Poulantzas and Laclau amongst others. Of interest was the development of the notion of modes of production, through which Wolpe sought to explain the specific capitalist nature of South Africa, rather as Laclau did for Latin America (Laclau, 1977). Although Wolpe would later revise some of his understandings, his work nevertheless provides a good entry into the central issues at stake here.

In *Race, class and the apartheid state* (1988) Wolpe argues for the need to transcend one-dimensional views of class and race in South Africa: they are neither simply in contradiction, as Liberal Modernization theory would have it, nor are they directly functional or equivalent as the CST thesis would have it. Wolpe argued that previous attempts at theorizing political identity in South Africa had

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effected what he terms closures – either explanation in terms of race (usually conceived of as primary), or economic reductionism (where race is a mere epiphenomenon of economic/class factors). Wolpe's argument in turn suggests that the way to overcome these problems is through careful historicizing, that is, understanding how the race/class couplet changes over time. Wolpe proceeds to argue for a differentiation between abstract and concrete class relations, the concrete accommodating non-class relations as well as those such as race. However, as Hudson (1990a and 1990b) points out, drawing once more upon the work of Althusser, Wolpe's argument is based on a conflation of empirical and conceptual relations, especially since class is always only a concept.

It is thus within these general debates around race, class, the project of Althusser and questions as to the future of socialism in South Africa that Peter Hudson's specific interventions should be situated. The overall impression of his work is of careful, detailed analyses of the arguments mounted by others, but very little by way of concrete application.

Hudson (1986a, 1987b, and 1994) provides a useful overview of the work of Laclau and Mouffe – a dense, detailed and critical reading, but as suggested no particular application (which may imply, as we suggest later, that the question of application is a problem for the theory itself). Hudson suggests that the aim of post-Marxism is the explanation of forms of social consciousness – of subjectivities – which he sees as a significantly different enterprise from that of classical Marxism with its characteristic class reductionism. By pointing to a number of standard moves using the work of Saussure, Benveniste, Lacan, and Derrida (the contemporary "discourse move"), Hudson argues that for post-Marxists such as Laclau and Mouffe the subject is structurally located in the same position as the sign. The identity of a sign is a result of its difference from other signs; there are no positive

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terms but only differences. In the same way, Benveniste suggests, language plays an essential part in the construction of subjectivity. Not only is it impossible to be aware of oneself without contrasting oneself with others, but this very capacity is in turn predicated upon a grammatical distinction, that between "I" and "You". Further, every subject is a speaking subject – that is, the subject is the effect of signification, a signification which is itself constituted by and as infinite play (Derrida). As a consequence, there is no human essence or, as a variant thereof, no essential and specifiable class position.

In fact, the supposed essentialism of the classical Marxist project is one of the prime targets of Laclau and Mouffe. Into this critique they insert the work of Gramsci, suggesting that identities are the result of a hegemonic practice, the creation of a nodal point – itself a precarious fixing. Identities or subject-positions are the product of a variety of signifying practices, and every individual has a number of subject-positions. In this account a regular articulatory practice, a recurring ensemble of signifiers, is described as a discourse or discursive formation. It is thus simply hegemonic discursive intervention which constructs identity, and as a result subjectivity and political identity cease to have any necessary connection with social positioning but must be understood to be the result of discursive articulation.

The most overt attempt to apply the work of Laclau and Mouffe to the South African situation has come from two South African scholars now resident in the UK, Aletta Norval and David Howarth. In general their applications echo the basic tenets of Laclau's understanding of subject constitution, and they also concern themselves with the promotion of the "radical democratic" project. However, overall they provide few, if any, interesting or new insights as regards the South African situation.

In an early paper Norval and Howarth (1992) suggest that the notion of subjectivity is built around "constitutive lack", an

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production of anthropological knowledge,[34] comparative history,[35] history and space,[36] power/knowledge in social research.[37] All of them are located within the broader discussion of attempts to conduct social sciences differently. On the level of conceptualization and theory, post-colonialism shows an engagement with post-structuralism[38] and post-modernism.[39] In some cases, it is indistinguishable from them.

As an attempt to move away from mainstream social science, post-colonialism is developing within them, and thus carries with it some problems from these disciplines. In point form, the following can be seen as some of the difficulties that post-colonialism is facing:

- Post-colonialism operates with the philosophical dualism of subject/object. This is a critical issue in the area of power/knowledge.
- It has not problematized the issue of translation in the practice of social research. That is, how does the shift from one language to the other occur in the conduct of social research? Whose language does the research text reflect? Who speaks in the research text? This is an area that post-colonialism would have to address.
- Linked to the issue of translation are the questions of writing, representation, voice, and appropriation. All these come to the surface in social research.
- Post-colonialism appropriates North American post-colonialism. This is a problem of perception. Post-colonialism is seen to be from outside. It is seen to have no immediate relevance for contemporary politics in South Africa.
- Post-colonialism, at present, appears formalistic and elitist, in that it is concentrated in the HWUs.
- To engage with post-colonialism requires knowledge and interest in interdisciplinarity, as it is informed by various disciplines. Few scholars have the requisite interdisciplinary breadth and experience to engage at a sophisticated level with the complex issues at stake.

The current vogue of post-colonialism lies in its ability to have raised new research questions for the social sciences. Post-colonial

research is putting into the research agenda of contemporary social scientific research issues of identity-formation; the critique of Marxist social theory; representation; narrativity; spatiality; and the power/ knowledge relationship in social research. It is also emerging through systematic theoretical discussions (Deacon, Leroke, Thornton). That is, post-colonialism operates with the combination of theory and research, in order to provide guidelines which the social sciences could profitably employ.

Thus, post-colonialism is not concerned with the interpretation of a totality called South Africa. It is rather an articulation and appropriation of multiple localities that "inhabit" the geopolitical space named South Africa. Even though post-colonialism is in its embryonic stage, the research that has been conducted is stimulating, and challenges the dominant practices in the social sciences.

In South African social sciences post-colonialism is not a theory. It is also not an explicit political project, in comparison to the post-colonial projects of Said and Spivak, for example. Post-colonialism is not yet a discipline or intellectual position. It is a set of methodological and epistemological questions that are concerned with the reconstruction of the social sciences. But the formulation of these questions is not directed towards a theory or intellectual position. The questions enable the researchers to pursue innovative research. The questions tend to be specific, local and critical. They are not the big questions of structure, totality, history, development and social organization.

In conclusion, I have used the term post-colonialism in this chapter to try to describe new research projects that are currently emerging in the South African social sciences. Thus, post-colonialism is a temporal term that I employ to enable me to interpret these diverse projects. These are the projects that are emerging on the margins of mainstream social sciences. However, they are emerging in an attempt to transcend the limitations of mainstream social sciences. Thus they remain inside, while attempting to be outside. Underlying these

projects is the desire to contribute to the development of social scientific research and discussion in South Africa.

Endnotes

1 *Black skin, white masks,* translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967. Originally published in 1952), and *The wretched of the earth,* translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1964. Originally published in 1961).

2 *Liberti I: Negritude et humanisme* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1964).

3 *The African origin of civilization: Myth or reality?* translated by Mercer Cook (New York: L. Hill, 1974).

4 *The colonizer and the colonized* (Earthscan: London, 1990).

5 *Return to the source: Selected speeches of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), and *Unity and struggle* (London: Heinemann, 1980).

6 *Discourse on colonialism,* translated by Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

7 *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1972).

8 Arif Dirlik, "The postcolonial aura: Third world criticism in the age of global capitalism", *Critical Inquiry* 20:330 (Winter 1994).

9 Said and Spivak, for example, are among those who are involved in social struggle, while at the same time teaching at Columbia University in the United States.

10 *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature* (London: James Currey, 1986); *Moving the centre: The struggle for cultural freedom* (London: James Currey, 1993).

11 *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge* (London: James Currey, 1988).

12 *In my father's house* (New York: Metheun, 1992); "Is the post- in postmodernism the post- in postcolonial", *Critical Inquiry* 17, 1991.

13 *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); *Culture and imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993).

14 *The location of culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

15 *Blank darkness: Africanist discourse in French* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

16 *Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

17 *The post-colonial critic: Interviews, strategies, dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1991); *Outside in the teaching machine* (London: Routledge, 1993).

18 *African philosophy: Myth and reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

19 Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "Critical Fanonism", *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Spring 1991); Edward Said's *Culture and imperialism* is inspired by Fanon, as opposed to *Orientalism* which was influenced by the work of Foucault. Bhabha and Spivak also work through Fanon.

20 Said's *Orientalism* (1975) and *Culture and imperialism* (1993).

21 Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, globalization and the world system: Contemporary conditions for the representation of identity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

22 See the illuminating discussion on this issue by Anthony Kwame Appiah, "Is the post- in postmodernism the post- in postcolonial", *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Winter 1991).

23 Roger Deacon, "Hegemony, essentialism and radical history in South Africa", *South African* Historical Journal 24 (1991); and Windsor S. Leroke, "Three objections to a reconstructed Marxism", *South African Sociological Review* 5 (2), 1993.

24 This situation contrasts with that in international post-colonialism where "postcolonial critics insist that they are Marxists, but Marxists who reject the nineteenth-century heritage" of Marxism with its universalistic pretensions that ignored historical differences.

25 The work of Laclau and Mouffe has, for example, highlighted the limitation of traditional Marxist social theory. See their classic *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (London: Verso, 1985). See also Bertoldi and Van Zyl, this volume.

26 Windsor S. Leroke, Transcending sociology: The emergence of postmodern social theory, in Norma Romm & Mike Sarakinsky (eds), *Social Theory* (Johannesburg: Lexicon, 1994).

27 Post-colonialism argues that social sciences are forms of power in as much they are forms of knowledge. This view comes from Foucault, who argues that power and knowledge are interlinked (*The order of things: An archaeology of knowledge*, New York: Random, 1970; *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*, Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980). In South Africa, there have been similar attempts to develop this argument. See, for example, Jonathan D. Jansen (ed.) *Knowledge and power in South Africa: Critical perspectives across the disciplines* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1991).

28 Gayatri Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?", in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (Urbana: University of

Illinois Press, 1988); and *In Other worlds: Essays in cultural politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

29 Jennifer Robinson, "White women researching/representing others: From anti-apartheid to postcolonialism", in Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (eds), *Writing women and space: Colonial and postcolonial geographies* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994); and Shireen Hassim and Cheryl Walker, Women's studies and the women's movement", *Transformation* 18 (1992).

30 Windsor S. Leroke, "Koze Kube Nini? The violence of representation and the politics of social research in South Africa", paper presented at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July, 1994.

31 Jennifer Robinson, "White women researching/representing others: From anti-apartheid to postcolonialism", in Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (eds), *Writing women and space: Colonial and postcolonial geographies* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994); and Jennifer Robinson, "Apartheid subjects and post-colonialism: Native Administrators in Port Elizabeth, 1945-1970", paper presented at the History workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July 1994.

32 Shireen Hassim and Cheryl Walker, "Women's studies and the women's movement", *Transformation* 18 (1992).

33 Robert Thornton, "The potentials of boundaries: Steps toward a theory of the social edge", paper presented at the *History* Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July 1994.

34 Carolyn Hamilton, "History, anthropology and the limits on the invention of Africa", paper presented at the Anthropology Department seminar, 18 March 1994, University of the Witwatersrand.

35 Ran Greenstein, "acial formation: towards a comparative study of collective identities in South Africa and the United States", *Social dynamics*, 19(2), Summer 1993; and "Identity, democracy and politcal rights: South Africa In A comparative perspective", paper presented at the History Workshop, 13-15 July 1994, University of the Witwatersrand.

36 Gary Minkley and Leslie Witz, "Sir Harry Smith and his imbongi: Local identities in the Eastern Cape, 1952", paper presented at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July 1994; Gary Minkley, "Race, Class and Space in the 'Pre'-Industrialisation of East London", paper presented at the Work, Class, and Culture Symposium, University of the Witwatersrand, June 28-30, 1993; Gary Minkley, "A counter-raid into that other country of the racial past: Comments on Greenstein's 'Racial formation'", *Social Dynamics*, 19(2), Summer 1993.

37 Windsor S. Leroke, "Koze Kube Nini? The violence of representation and the politics of social research in South Africa", Paper Presented at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July, 1994.

38 Roger Deacon, "Hegemony, essentialism and radical history in South Africa", *South African Historical Journal* 24 (1991); and Windsor S. Leroke, "Politics of identity and the history of South African trade unionism: A Critique of Literature", paper presented at Centre for Industrial and Labour Studies, University of Natal, October 13 1993.

39 Geoffrey Wood, "Of ecstacies or of rhizomes; Of social jesting or social critique? Key issues in postmodernism", *South African Journal of Sociology*, 24(3) (1993); Windsor S. Leroke, "Transcending Sociology: The emergence of post-modern social theory", in Norma Romm & Mike Sarakinsky (eds), *Social Theory* (Johannesburg: Lexicon, 1994). One of the critical developments is the international conference (July 1995) was organized by African Studies Association of South Africa (ASASA) with the theme of "Postmodernism in Africa".

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4

Afrocentrism in South African social science: What has been done, how useful has it been?

Themba Sono

Introduction

What has been done in the field of Afrocentrism studies in South Africa? The simple answer is not much. How has Afrocentrism affected South African social science? The answer to this is somewhat surprising considering that African-oriented viewpoints and ways of thinking have been common cause among African political movements in South Africa since 1958 at least.[1] Moreover, black scholarship, in both the United States and South Africa has generally tended to follow too closely on the heels of the rhetoric of popular political movements (Sono, 1993c; Sono, 1994). The emergence of Black Consciousness thinking (with its twin ancillaries, Black Power and Black Theology) – thinking which preceded Afrocentrism in both the US and South Africa – most likely spurred on the development of Afrocentrism in South Africa.

The American Afrocentric school of thought, like many other social or intellectual fads in South Africa, is an import from the US, a precursor to the South African version. The US Black Power movement, which predated Afrocentricity, had a direct and profound

influence on the emergence of Black Consciousness thinking in South Africa (Sono, 1993c:33-61).

With regard to South African social sciences scholarship, this Afrocentric (Africentric) paradigm, unlike its American counterpart which has been in vogue since it was formally launched by Asante (1980), has not taken great hold despite the efforts of some black (African) political figures and scholars, who have been engaged in the tendentious definition of the African personality as being distinguished by an unique world-view with its own conception of existential reality (e.g. Khoapa, 1986; Manganyi, 1973:33-61). There is, Africentrists argue, a need for an African epistemology and phenomenology.

Perhaps the appropriate basic question to pose is: Is there a genuine Afrocentric paradigm in South African social sciences research and analysis? We use the concept of "paradigm" in the fashion of Thomas Kuhn (1970) who first used it to refer to the coherent traditions that define the theories, applications, methodologies and underlying assumptions of a scientific discipline at a particular juncture in the development of that discipline. Yet to respond to this question at this juncture would be to prejudge this analysis.

Despite its being an antecedent of Black Consciousness, it is a variant of Afrocentrism and thus of dubious analytic value in research methodology. So neither it nor its twin ancillaries – Black Power and Black Theology – will detain us here, since these three fall outside this focus, being neither epistemological and theoretical approaches nor methodological practices.

Although Afrocentrism has been a direct offspring of the culture of protest politics (as well as protest scholarship in West Africa), in South Africa it has found resonance less in the literature of political studies than in the studies of African psychologists at South African universities. But before examining what has been done, we need to acquaint ourselves with the meaning of the Afrocentric approach.

The Afrocentric approach

To lend clarity to the dimensions and parameters of this paradigm, it may be helpful to quote from the chief advocate (and originator) of the concept itself:

The need for an Afrocentric philosophy is so great that ... [historically, it is without precedent, combining the elements of philosophy, science, history and mythology to give us the clearest perspective on that peculiar and particular group of people called the African-American. The question most often encountered is why? Why the need for an Afrocentric philosophy? Why should Africa be at the centre? And my question is why not? Who else would you want to have at your centre? It does not take away from the university or humanity of man to have a particular culture or history to stand as one's centre since all cultures share certain universal traits; but they do not necessarily resemble each other. Afrocentricity resembles the black man, speaks to him, looks like him and wants for him what he wants for himself (Asante, 1980:2).[2]

The originator of this concept warns that the "psychology of the black person without Afrocentricity has become a matter of great concern. Instead of looking out from his own centre, the non-Afrocentric person operates in a manner that is negatively predictable. His images, symbols, lifestyles, and manners are contradictory to himself and thereby destructive to his personal and collective growth and development" (Asante, 1980). Thus Afrocentricity is a rejection of the centrality of conventional scholarship and scientism − a rejection of the Western intellectual tradition and modes of analysis. *Afrocentricity regards Western scholarships as a by-product of Eurocentricity.* That is, as half-truth, as a partial perspective, to be made whole only in combination with other culture-specific perspectives such as Afrocentricity. This approach was in fact contesting the sort of viewpoint reflected in, for example, the following expression by Bozeman (1976:47): "the norm of society is the modern industrial

society of the West; and ... the typical human being is a man functioning rationally in the economic environment of a twentieth-century Western society". In otder words the norm of thought, scholarship, history, science, is that of Euro-America.

Many African-American scholars were later to join the Asante Afrocentric school (e.g. Shore, 1982; Akbar, 1984; Hilliard, 1981; Ben-Jochanan, 1983; Finch, 1982; Newsome, 1980; and others). Still more had adopted the approach (without the label) even before Asante came on to the scene such as Adams, 1979; Cox, 1975; Van Sertima, 1976; James, 1976; Winters, 1979; Williams, 1973. A significant number had merely sought to recapture the role of a neglected or forgotten legacy (such as Perry, 1887; Scobic, 1981 and Snowden 1971). An African American scholar even began to see the need for "Africentric Social Sciences for Human Liberation" (Akbar, 1984).

But not all forerunners or the Afrocentric school of thought were Americans. There were Africans also. In fact, the greatest contributor, perhaps, to the origin of the idea of Afrocentricity is none other than the West African, Cheikh Anta Diop whose seminal work, *The African origin of civilization: Myth or reality* (1974), was to revolutionize thinking in Afro-America. Van Sertima spread the Afrocentric seminal thinking of Diop, not only after his *They came before Columbus: The African presence in ancient America* (1976) was published, but especially after he founded the Afrocentric publications *Journal of African Civilization* (1979). It was the ringing of Diop that first awoke black Americans from their intellectual slumber.

Our investigations have convinced us that the West has not been calm enough and objective enough to teach us our history correctly without crude falsifications... Ancient Egypt was a Negro civilization. The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt ... The

African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective, nor unruffled; he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic ... Instead of presenting itself to history as an insolvent debtor, that Black world is the very initiator of the "Western" civilization flaunted before our eyes today (Diop, 1974:xiv).

One of those who accepted Diop's challenge was the Sierra Leonian, George Cox, whose *Crucial insights into African history* (1975) was a *tour de force*. Olela's "The African foundations of Greek philosophy" (1977) made the "fundamental claim [that] the historical foundation of the modern African world-view as well as that of the Greeks and Romans came from Ancient Africans (Egyptians)". In this work Olela was not only disputing the "argument ... that the African mind is in no way capable of any systematic philosophy" but was also arguing that European/Western philosophy locates its basis and origins in Africa. The Caribbean scholar, Walter Rodney, in showing *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (1974), similarly showed how Africa laid the basis for European development. Rodney was reminding the scholarly world of the *African role* in European development. An exposition of such a role would require an Africentric epistemological slant.

While much of African scholarship and a sizeable number of scholars in African America in the early 1980s were seized of the Africa-centred perspective, South Africa demonstrated no such predispositions, as I will show below. This of course is not to say that an Afrocentric *tendency* was not displayed, especially since many South African black scholars studied or sojourned in the US during the late 70s and 80s. When it found expression it was predominantly in an area that would generally have been expected. African psychologists seem more predisposed to Afrocentric tendencies than other academics such as African political scientists or historians.

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What has been done?

Beginning from the premise that all people view the world on the basis of their particular belief systems, Bodibe (1995) argues that an "indigenized model" of psychology is necessary if clinicians are to succeed in appreciating cultural idiosyncrasies. This indigenized model contains Afrocentric tendencies. For the African this idiosyncrasy was his operation within a model that accommodates forces such as gods, nature spirits, ancestors and witches. Yet Bodibe's may not be considered an Afrocentric model since, in a previous paper, he had endorsed Holdstock's (1992) views which frowned upon Afrocentric-like models. Bodibe endorses Holdstock when he writes that the practice of psychology has to date been largely "monocultural, monotheistic, monadic, ethnocentric, egocentric, egotistical, individualistic, idiocentric, individuocentric, selfish, self-contained, bounded, self-reliant, independent" (cited in Bodibe, 1994:20).

Bodibe's dilemma, similar perhaps to many potential Afrocentrists in South Africa, is that while wishing to avoid the wholesale import to South Africa of Euro-American psychology, and being tempted by the restoration of African self-consciousness (Bodibe, 1994:17), he seeks to settle on the centre, which is a *multi*-cultural counselling therapy/ curriculum. This is the problem that seems to be facing black psychologists in South Africa: this country, with a large Euro-African population, is not wholly African – at least in its scholarship and scientific disposition – despite its being embedded in the African continent. Although Bodibe informs us in his 1993 work that "Africans have a cosmology, ontology, eschatology, epistemology and axiology that is quintessentially their own", this is a truth that has long been noted by other European scholars (such as Forde, 1964; Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Junod, 1937; Tempels, 1945; Frobenious, 1928; Balandier, 1969). But it is necessary for an African scholar "to define my Africanness and be rid of the shackles of definition by the other", in the words of Mathabe (1994).

In seeking to define her Africanness, while acknowledging the vast diversity that is Africa Mathabe – a psychologist like Bodibe, Gobodo, Mabetoa, Manganyi and Mdleleni – concedes that there are "basic and fundamental aspects of the African world which run throughout the varied deviations from the core and define it as fundamentally distinct and independent of the Eurocentric cosmology" (Mathabe, 1994). Although Mathabe does not make this clear, it seems she endorses Holdstock's summary of Jackson's (1982) views on Africentric psychology. Holdstock states that "Africentric psychology incorporates the Western, and conceivably also the Eastern experience, with the African. While its roots are firmly embedded within African culture, its branches extend towards many other cultures" (cited by Mathabe, 1994:70-71). Neither Mathabe nor psychologists of similar bent explain what makes (Holdstock's or Jackson's conception) *Africentric*.

For Mabetoa (1992:8), the objective "is to demonstrate that the African world-view, with its accompanying values and beliefs, not only reflects a different social reality that is both viable and functional; but that it has far reaching implications for mental health and, in particular, the rehabilitation of African mental patients". Mabetoa's is thus a more focused (psychology/mental health) perspective of a larger canvas, expressed by Sono (1992:19) in the following terms (cited in Mabetoa, 1992:8:

African myth, as essence, is that African history, knowledge, psychology, religion, values, etc. have a reality and value of their own which cannot be invalidated by making references to other civilisations and cultures. Their truths and strength lie in the deeper archives of individual, social and natural/supernatural psyche of a particular people at a particular place and time.

In a study predating the emergence of the Afrocentric approach (but in a period coinciding with the heyday of Afrocentricity's political precursor, Black Consciousness, Manganyi came close to Afrocen-

tricity when he ruminated over an "approach of the kind [which] would appear to promise a greater probability of meaningfully studying the African mode of relating, the African mode of being-in-the-world; the African mode of relating (dialogue) to the body, to others, to objects and to space and time" (Manganyi, 1973:37). He was suggesting then that there is a quintessentially *African mode* of perceiving the universe.

Yet, eight years later (1981), he seemed to be vacillating, to be searching for a middle, common ground. In 1973 he had endorsed African personality, a Senghorian Negritudist conception of the sum of the cultural values of the black world (Manganyi, 1973:36). But in 1981 while agonizing over the African mode, he was also searching for a "cross-cultural and inter-racial conversation" (Manganyi, 1981:70). The 1981 view could, of course, also be seen as an expansion, as a universalization, of the 1973 Negritudist view. It could be seen more as an attempt to bridge the gaps. A similar effort is displayed by Mabetoa when he suggests that we "can reliably speak in terms of a European definitional system as well as an African definitional system" (Mabetoa, 1994:12).

Gobodo, perhaps reflecting on the dilemma of "dual" paradigms in South Africa, argues that regardless of how "civilised" we might claim to be, we will still be regulated, in part, by the ethos of our original culture (Gobodo, 1990:90). Yet, despite this prevalence of a traditional African world-view it seems, Gobodo will only be comfortable with a model which will enable all psychologists to spell out the appropriate role of culture, which will also simultaneously recognize individual dimensions within these varieties. Another psychologist, Thembeka Mdleleni in dealing with the *amafufunyane* spirit possession, writes that when examining patient claims of this possession, "Western-trained professionals tend to make assumptions that are derived from their own previous experiences and from the diagnostic categories of Western culture. In the process of assessment, the patient's own experience of his or her illness is usually overlooked or ignored"

(Mdleleni, 1987:42). Writing earlier on, anthropologist Harriet Ngubane notices the differences, not to be ignored, between Western and African medical (Ngubane, 1981:361).

A prolific contributor to the regeneration of the African way (as in *Africa is my witness* and *Indaba my children*) is the non-academic traditionalist, Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa. In a speech presented at a seminar on African culture at the University of Boputhatswana in 1992, he stated:

Before our people can progress, they must rediscover their soul and their soul lies in their heritage. The heritage that they have been conditioned to discard with contempt. The heritage that they had been conditioned to look askance upon. There lies your soul, Africa! (Mutwa, 1993, cited in Sono 1992(a):23)

Mutwa makes a strong Afrocentric appeal for Africans to peer at the world through the cultural eyes of Africa, deciphering and explicating the mysteries of the universe via the perspectives of African value systems. Others, such as the African religion scholar, Leeuw (1993), see the problem as essentially the lack of an Africa-centred point of departure and a dependence on the redundant abundance of mimicry. "What studies have been made on the whole – on the African religious heritage – amount to a regurgitation. There is, therefore, a slumbering presence of scientific "inobjectivity" ... In the light of what has been stated it is not misleading to assert that the *method of approach* to the African religious heritage in South Africa has been one of acquiring desired data selectively to the exclusion of new evidence. The data became classified into standard categories" (Leeuw 1993,cited in Sono, 1993:23).

. Leeuw goes on to note that the only conspicuous difference in these categories is the diction. This diction is a function of the "prejudice of imperialism" which imposes terminology that "does not have African equivalents in the religious context. The following are

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examples of such terminology: *Magical beliefs, magic, ancestor worship, divination spirit, rain-making worship of the moon ...*" (1993:27).

In sociology the great exponent of the Africa-centred perspective is Herbert Vilakazi who argues, primarily in the mass media, with specific reference to South Africa, that the "African experience is the dominant experience in our society, as Africans are the overwhelming majority." He then agitates for the centrality of the *African experience* as the cognitive point of reference — in the formulation of public policy, as well as the study of politics, economics, social sciences, and so on.

Reviewing literature going back to classical antiquity, Sono (1993b) shows that not only in religion and history but in science, mathematics, medicine, metallurgy, technology and the influence of African words on English language, an Africa-centred epistemology is not a mere unsubstantiated rhetoric, but has a basis. Still, Mazisi Kunene, in his undated "African cosmology" paper argues that "the basic and fundamental African world view differs radically from the Western System. It may even be more useful to juxtapose one system against the other without making evaluative statements." Such a "radically different" world-view demanded, in the opinion of neo-Afrocentrists, its own mode of analysis whose language and paradigm would not merely be mimetic. Mabetoa's contribution is helpful here: writing on "Spirit invasion: An Afrocentric approach", he points out that "ukuthwasa is recognised as an illness, the symptoms of which are caused by the ancestral spirits who wish to possess the future diviner or *igqirha*" (Mabetoa,1994:34).

How useful has it been?

The usefulness of the Afrocentric paradigm in South African scholarship has been somewhat less than originally touted when it first emerged in the US. Even my "blurb" statement on Asante's 1980 book that "Afrocentricity will become the new philosophical home for millions" has not been borne out by events. But its failure to seize the

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analytical thinking of many is not in itself proof of a failure of usefulness, for the meanings of usefulness could be varied.

Firstly, its emergence has helped to clarify the creative tension between Western-oriented and African-oriented scholarship. South African black psychologists, for instance, in grappling with the conflicts of culture specific and 'universalist' perspectives, have been helped to reconcile the *problematique* of universalism and relativism. Notice the conclusions of Masetle for example:

> ... there are ever growing numbers of cross cultural encounters facing professionals in the future (in South Africa) ... The beauty of the phenomena of nature is that people share the same psychological processes essential for human existence which enable them to establish meaningful interactions across cultural boundaries (Masetle, in Mwaba *et al.* 1994:120).

In a society that has been savaged by the apartheid ethos, African scholars were understandably leery of being perceived as too close to *any* perspective that seemed to be ethnocentric: not only Masetle's statement above but also Mabetoa's synergistic employment of a "European definitional system ... and an African definitional system" is proof of that sensitivity. On the other hand, some African psychologists remained insistent on having an Afrocentric mode incorporated into psychology perspectives. Intones Bodibe in an undated paper:

> ... during the Psychology and Societal Transformation Conference held at the University of the Western Cape ... white psychologists still insisted on the ideology of "One World, One Psychology" and opposed the promotion of an indigenous psychology that would accommodate the belief and value systems of the indigenous groups in the country. Their main argument was that the development of new paradigms would create cultural tensions and promote a series of polarities.

It was in an implicit attempt – albeit cultural – to balance these two paradigms that Manganyi refers to the possible emergence of a "potential language – the potential cross-cultural and inter-racial conversations which should be going on, not only in the conscious-ness of creative artists and opinion makers, but in the meanings and symbols that could become public as collective national culture" (Manganyi, 1981:70). Masetle similarly argues:

A community is viewed as a complex system of interaction between cultural, social psychological, and ecological elements. Different researches done by various social scientists show that within the same community, no two people are alike unless they are identical twins... We should be aware by now that South Africa is a truly multi-cultural country (Masetle, in Mwaba, *et al.* 1994:112).

The point I am trying to make here is this: Afrocentrism has been useful to the extent that it has highlighted not only similarities but also differences between Western science and its theories on the one hand, and African scientism and its paradigms, on the other. Western science emphasizes measurability, quantification, empiricism, verification, objectivity. The African paradigm, while conceding measurability, dwells more on the intuitive, on immeasurability, on the metaphysical, precisely because the African system regards the physical and metaphysical as co-existential, in the words of Kunene (undated). Moreover, Afrocentrism has pointed out the dangers of wholesale importation to South Africa of Euro-American paradigms and models, some of which may not only be inappropriate but may also actually perpetuate some of the problems of Western perspectives.

Holdstock (1981) lamented that in a predominantly African country university psychology curricula take little cognizance of an African phenomenology and world-view. While the Afrocentric approach has helped to reveal cultural, historical, psychological and philosophical (African) dimensions in world scholarship hitherto generally ignored, if not disparaged, we should not, however, ignore the admonitions of that African-American scholar who recently wrote:

Afrocentrists want to reimpose the solidarity and cohesion ethnic communities cannot themselves maintain, no matter how hard they try... Afrocentrism aims to discredit not only the content of Westernization but also the universality of the rational faculty that produced it and comprehends it. Afrocentrism aims to liberate students from the demands of rationality, objectivity, the scientific method... (Wortham, cited in Sono, 1994:84).

This is the extent to which Afrocentrism has penetrated in the US. It should not be so in South Africa. Afrocentrism, like Marxism, is after all the product of Western rationality. African scientism cannot go far if it rejects not only the universality but also the products of the rational faculty. This faculty triumphed not because it was Eurocentric but simply because it was rational. Rejecting the *content* of Westernization is one thing, but rejecting its methodology or rational faculty is foolhardy. This is perhaps the greatest contribution of the Afrocentric approach: it has pinpointed the pitfalls of ethnocentric rigidities. In the US Afrocentricity has unfortunately fallen in the combat zone of ideological warfare. This is why its founder could rightly write about the "ideological significance of Afrocentricity" (Asante,1983).

Although the peculiar pitfalls that American Afrocentricity has fallen into should not be equated with those in South Africa, such pitfalls should not be ruled out. I concede Bodibe's *bona fides* when he writes that "the development of new models of psychology [and other social sciences?] which take into account cultural diversities does not necessarily mean a rupture with science". True, but South Africa has no tradition or track record of *independent* African scholarship. Bodibe may not remain in charge of the canons of scholarship. These may be usurped by the political intelligentsia and their degeneration would be guaranteed. Afrocentricity in South Africa is more popular outside academic institutions than inside. Practising artists frequently invoke it. This is its second "usefulness". To me its greatest contribution is that it

has given a number of African scholars a forum and a point of departure from which they could engage Western scholars in a new dialogue.

Endnotes

1   The formation of the Pan African Congress of South Africa in 1958, one year after the independence of Ghana – the first sub-Sahara African country to win independence from former colonial masters – heralded the "Africa for Africans" rhetoric. Africa-centred political rhetoric blew across the African continent, including South Africa.

2   Although this excerpt is by Kariamu Welsh, it has been partly crafted by the author himself, Molefi Kete Asante. Both Asante and his wife, Welsh, were close friends of this writer, especially immediately before, during, and after the period Asante was writing the Afrocentricity book. My comments on the back cover of the book reflect that closeness.

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5

"Where angels fear to tread": Feminism in South Africa

Annmarie Wolpe

Introduction

Second Wave feminism developed in the late 1960s in Western Europe and North America. Three major theoretical strands were identifiable – liberal, socialist/Marxist, and radical – all of which gave rise to a great deal of theoretical discussion and which impacted on more general modes of analysis of social phenomena by male academics. During the 1980s new theoretical positions were formulated, many of which were and are highly critical of socialist/ Marxist analyses. The developments contributed in no small way to the growth of black feminist movements which placed issues of racism and black women's identity firmly on the agenda.

The developments in feminist theory have informed a number of academic disciplines particularly in anthropology, sociology, education, economics, philosophy, politics, development, history, psychology, literary theory and so on. In addition there has been a mushrooming of individual options and women's studies courses worldwide in the tertiary system.[1]

In spite of the growth and development of feminism, there is a remarkable lack of information, especially in South Africa, about what constitutes feminist thought, and a misrepresentation of what

constitutes feminism. At the most basic level, feminism is a political movement which is concerned with the elimination of women's subordination. Feminist action may include active campaigning, as well as academic pursuits that analyse and attempt to understand the various aspects of women's subordination.

Feminism of a special type in South Africa

Generally feminist input has been slow to make its mark within the academic world in South Africa. One of the early books on women and resistance was not so much a "history of feminism", as Walker (1991) had said, but rather one concerned with the effects of "processes of urbanisation and proletarianisation" on "the meaning of and role assigned to motherhood and mothering within the liberation movement". She also pointed out that when she first started researching women "there was almost total indifference to the idea of women's studies within the academic community, and virtually no local body of scholarship on women's roles historically or on theories of gender on which to draw" (1991:xi). This absence is apparent in virtually all the disciplines, although women academics have pursued feminist forms of analysis, but largely on an individual and isolated basis.

The history of women's political struggle directed primarily against apartheid practices (Walker, 1991, Kimble & Unterhalter, 1982) did not take a feminist form.[2] This has had a major effect on the development of a feminist movement, because, among other things, inserting feminist demands was seen as a division form the main struggle (Clara, 1989; Hassim, n.d.).

From the 1980s onwards, there has been a range of social movements within the NGO world which have expressed "gender sensitive"[3] concerns, and whose protagonists may have seen themselves as feminist in that they wished to insert feminist ideals into forms of popular and adult education. This move, however, was

largely untheorized with regard to feminism and derived its direction, in the main, from the work of Freire (1972) and his concepts of empowerment and "conscientization" within the academic world in South Africa

Pointing to these developments highlights the difference between writing about women and feminist writing. In the first category are many important examples of work on women and various aspects of women's lives in the fields of health, adult education, voluntary organizations, domestic work and labour to mention just a few areas. Much historical work has also been conducted (Green & Spalding, 1992, Gordon, 1985, Moodie, n.d.[4]), and the largely descriptive accounts provide a wealth of empirical detail. 'Further, in the field of literary criticism, Lockett (1990) makes the telling point that men have examined women South African writers because of their importance, but not within a feminist framework. She cites one contemporary writer, Lerner, who rejects the view that Schreiner's *The story of an African farm* can be interpreted from a feminist perspective.

To present the state of art of feminist scholarship in South Africa is difficult for many reasons, not least the underdeveloped nature or absence of coherent schools of thought, and a hostility to feminist epistemology from the First World. Some women have indicated their desire to formulate women's analyses which take account of the specificities of ethnic differences in South Africa, but as yet no coherent theoretical framework has been presented. Further, much that is written is presented as papers at seminars, conferences and so on, and never finds its way into print. However, the feminist journal, *Agenda*, is an invaluable source as it not only publishes theoretical articles but also reflects some of the major concerns of and differences between feminists, for example the tensions between black and white feminists to which reference will be made below.

Yet there is no formal structure in which feminist voices may be heard. Feminists do not have a "professional" body like other disciplines (although there is a recently established feminist socialist

network), nor are there annual conferences[5] for feminists, except peripherally in their various professional associations. For example, women involved in English literature have been able to raise issues in the Association of University English Teachers of South Africa and in *Current Writing*, an annual publication devoted to "writing in South Africa", focusing on "feminism and writing" in Volume 2, 1990. The journal *Perspectives in Education* similarly devoted a complete issue to gender and education in 1993.

A common set of themes comes through in much of the work, namely a concern with race, class and gender, although these categories are seldom analysed theoretically. Clayton, for example, in the introduction to *Women and writing in South Africa*[6] says that "race complicates the question of gender in different social groups", and she talks of "the pressures of interracial attitudes" (1989:5). Many writers have voiced similar views and have criticized, sometimes quite vehemently, Western European feminists who are said not to have taken race into account. This has resulted in Western feminism being derogatively labelled, by white and black feminists alike, as white, middle class and/or bourgeois. In the preface to the 1990 issue of Current Writing Daymond, confirming Lockett's views, emphasizes the need for "women in this country to question every imported feminist argument and strategy, both for its validity and its probable local effect" (p. ii) because of the interface between politics and racism. In particular the area of identity and what she sees as the "blindness of Western feminists to the realities of Third-World women's lives" (p. iii). Driver (1990:231) in discussing the work of Kuzwayo, says that she retains the term feminist in relation to Kuzwayo even though the latter

> honours the current refusal by black South African women to assume a position whose ideology was formulated largely, in white middle-class Europe and America: feminism has, histori- cally, often been blind to the specific oppressions and exploitation suffered by black and working-class women.

What none of these writers has firmly pinpointed is the anger and sense of frustration which characterizes some black feminist writers, who claim that white feminists have effectively silenced their voice.[7]

In spite of this, Western European and North American feminist writers have provided the theoretical bases for much of the work that has been done, by black and white alike. For example, Lockett in *Current Writing* (1990) demonstrates how different feminist writers draw on specific aspects of French and North American feminist work.[8]

For the purposes of this review I have selected a number of articles and books[9] which reflect specific theoretical and empirical positions, and indicate some of the major theoretical paradigms that exist. This is not to suggest that the selection is comprehensive or, indeed, representative.

The overview will begin by examining some of the "grand" theoretical paradigms which include liberal, Marxist/socialist, psycho-analytic, developmental and third world aspects, as well as reference to some empirical studies which have been included even though their theoretical base does not conform to the theory under discussion. Post-modernism will be briefly considered as well as a contribution on gender and education. This will be followed by a consideration of some of the more important concepts that have informed feminist analysis, namely patriarchy, sex-gender system, family formation and experience. In the course of examining these different concepts attention will be drawn to the way in which theoretical and empirical accounts relate to class and ethnic factors.

Broad approaches to feminism

Liberal

Liberal feminism assumes that, given equal facilities within all sectors of society, women should attain equality and discriminatory practices would be eliminated. Within this paradigm, class and ethnic

differences are not specifically addressed as the measures predicated in this framework are seen to be inclusive.

One example of analysis couched in liberal terms is that of Morrell (1993/1994) who identifies the Freedom Charter's demand for equal rights in education and concludes that there are two ways of addressing the question, the first through provision of equal chances for access and success in schooling, and the second through addressing "classroom and school dynamics".

■ *Marxist/Socialist*

Marxist/socialist analyses have accepted the notion of a class-based society determined in the last instance by the specific mode of production. Within this framework, the private and the public spheres of the subordination of women are analysed. One of the main criticisms levelled against Marxist analyses in particular has to do with their failure to address power relations between men and women, a point which is taken up in Maharaj's (1994) contribution discussed below.

Some analyses have been made within a Marxist framework, such as that by Horn (1991). Horn surprisingly draws on the work of C. Delphy, a French feminist, whom she says sees "the oppression of women (and the ideological practices and institutions which uphold it) being linked to the maternal patriarchal exploitation which results from the domestic mode of production" (1991:27).[10] Thus Horn tried to link the concept of patriarchy to a Marxist analysis in which she refers to capitalist modes of production and the formal and the informal labour market. With regard to the formal labour market she attributes the absence of women from mining and other major industries to patriarchal relations without giving an account of how this occurs.

Berger (1992) has conducted the most detailed historical analysis with rich empirical material of the employment of women, black and white, from 1900 to 1980. She calls for "the integration of gender into

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working class history[which] ... needs to reshape accepted ideas about proletarianization" (1992:296). She does not give a recipe for how this may be achieved, although she accepts that patriarchal power was eroded by what she terms "the flood of black families" to the cities. She attempts to reconceptualize class to include "women's experience" (1992:10), thus attempting to extend class analysis.

There have been several detailed accounts of differences with the labour market. The classic study was that done by Cock (1989) on domestic workers; and Budlender (1992) provided detailed accounts of the labour market. Makgetla (1995) conceptualized the status quo in terms of what she calls the primary and secondary labour market, in which she includes the informal sector as well as agricultural and domestic labour. This analysis does not take account of class differences, nor the conditions which give rise to the form the informal sector takes nor the massive difference between women in the informal sector, agriculture and domestic labour.

■ *Psychoanalytic*

Juliet Mitchell (1974) pioneered feminist psychoanalytical theory in the UK. Since then, major strides have been made in different fields — film studies, cultural studies, and so on — and in different countries, with French feminists making unique contributions. Yet the impact of pschyoanalytical theory in South Africa appears minimal, and where it occurs it does not appear to be well received. For example, according to Clayton (1989), Driver employs Lacanian analyses in some of her work in literacy criticism but, says Clayton critically, this "may exclude the harsh and painful realities of suffering and oppression experienced by women" (1990:3), the more so because "South African writers need rationality and reason if they are to involve themselves actively and positively in the current debates" (1990:4), which presumably, as pointed out above, would have to include "race".

- *Third World women and development*

Remarkably lacking in the literature is theoretical and analytical work on women and developmental issues, an absence even more striking given the high proportion of women resident in rural areas.[11] There are numerous articles relating to policy questions on land redistribution, water requirements, traditional rights of rural women and so on. In spite of the lack of theoretical and informed empirical studies, this is another area in which black feminists in particular, drawing heavily on the work of people like Mohanty (1991), criticize white feminists.

- *Post-modernism*

Post-modernism and post-structuralism have become the dominant strands of feminist writing, particularly in the UK. The major attempt to set out post-modern theory in South Africa is by Maharaj (1994) who talks in terms of a "practice-based structural approach to account for the experiences and interaction of women and men as gendered beings" (1994:40). In following the theoretical work of Connell (1987), Maharaj sets out an agenda of "practical guidelines" for changing the "current gender order".

- *Education*

The most detailed account of gender differences in education was made by the late Kate Truscott (1992) in her NEPI Report. In a set of notes for developing NEPI research projects, she highlighted the limitations of work in South Africa. Recognizing the large literature which exists elsewhere in the world, she expressed the need to take account of the specificities of South African conditions, in particular "the political economy of apartheid, as well as the culture of mass resistance and struggle" (Truscott, 1992:2).

In an empirical study on the provision of training for women by some community organizations in the Western Cape, Wolpe (1994) theorized non-formal educational provision in relation to the labour market, both formal and informal.

Key feminist concepts

There are a number of concepts which have been crucial to the development of feminist theory. For the purposes of this review patriarchy, experience, sex-gender system, and family formation will be considered.

■ *Patriarchy*

Patriarchy has been one of the most extensively used concepts providing an account of the specific forms of women's subordination. Its epistemological base is varied and ranges from psychoanalytic to radical. It is generally taken to refer to a universal principle of male power which is unfortunately seldom clearly defined and is employed in a number of different ways, thus containing a fundamental incoherence as a unitary concept. On this basis, the interrelationship with class and ethnic differences is not seen as necessarily constituting a problem. It is possible to identify a number of different ways in which the concept has been used in South Africa.

Bozzoli (1983), in attempting to provide an account which includes "race", class and gender, conceived of a "patchwork of patriarchies" to take account of different familial structures. She employed notions of domestic struggle to account for ethnic differences in women's place in the labour market.

Driver (1989), in examining the writing of Pauline Smith, refers to the role of patriarchy and its effect on women writers. She argues that

> an inquiry into text and patriarchy opens up some discussion of the possibilities and constraints that exist for women who write under patriarchy, understanding patriarchy both in its general Lacanian sense and its reference to Smith's historical context, which is to say, the context that she constructed, both in her fiction and her other writing (1989:75).

It would seem that Driver is here attempting to overcome the ahistorical nature of the concept of patriarchy.

Hassim (no date) presents data which contradict the notion that traditional black (in this case Zulu) society was singularly patriarchal. Hassim says there is evidence of far more complex social relations and, in more recent work, has "focused on the influence that the wife was able to exert on decision-making in periods of conflict and dislocation when the young men, at least, were away" (p. 5). Yet, she says: "despite the fact that the Inkatha leadership stresses equality between men and women in its public speeches, women continue to be discriminated against when they attempt to take on political roles ... African women are held back as much by traditional values concerning their role as they are by the sexual division of labour" (p. 9).

Her work was critically reviewed by Salo (1994) who questioned not only the notion of patriarchy, but also what constitutes feminist action, arguing that action by women has to be read "within particular socio-economic and historical context. Salo, however, fails to define what she means by feminism and feminist action. There is here, as with Driver, an attempt to create a different notion of what constitutes "feminism".

Although by no means stated explicitly, Wells (1993), in accounting for the short-lived nature of women's resistance to pass laws, argues that struggles against the pass laws dissolved in the face of intolerance and repression from males and the single-focused nature of struggles. In this instance, the repression from males can be seen as a form of patriarchy.

An extension of the concept of patriarchy is visible in discussions which have occurred in relation to what is defined as power relations between men and women, and its link to masculinity and femininity. Cock's book on war and gender in South Africa raises the question of the politics of gender, defines this as power relations between men and women and locates these in various areas such as employment, education, sexual harassment and so on. She describes the differences between the

various ethnic groups and relates this to the ideology of domesticity. She concludes: "In all these traditions the ideals of masculinity and femininity have been sharply polarised. In all of them an ideology of domesticity is deeply inscribed in the sense that being a wife and mother is viewed as the core of women's role in society" (Cock, 1991:30).

Such an analysis does not provide room for class or necessarily ethnic differences in particular.

There is very little writing by men on issues directly related to a feminist agenda. Morrell (1993/94) attempts to account for the genesis of masculine power through the form of the construction of masculinity in South Africa which is rooted in the socialization process through child rearing practices. Madlala (1995) suggests that cultural and socialization practices are important ingredients in the creation of women's subordination, and that class has nothing to do with it.

■ *Sex-gender system*

In an attempt to counter what was seen as the limiting effects of Marxist/socialist analyses, the American feminist Hartmann (1981) introduced the concept of a sex-gender system. This phrase is used by Walker (1991) who acknowledges that her theoretical overview starts from the basis of the interrelationship between colonialism and capitalism which is intersected by a sex-gender system.

Unfortunately she does not appear to define what she means by the sex-gender system or, indeed, whether it is derived from Hartmann. Then she goes on to pose the problem of the integration of gender, race and class. Exactly how this fits into a sex-gender system is not addressed. She argues that theory must take account of "the dynamics of men and women's experience in society and cross-culturally", but does not provide a means for so doing.

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■ Family formation

Theoretical accounts of the structure of the family formation are of obvious importance in a country as diverse as South Africa. Many feminists regard the family as a major site of women's subordination although some black feminist writers such as Hendricks and Lewis (1994), Lewis (1994) and Salo (1994) have questioned its applicability to black women. Salo (1994), agreeing with Lewis (1992) says: " ... the emasculation of black men by the South African state has shaped black and working class feminist struggles" (Salo, 1994).

Such a view, perhaps inadvertently, provides a legitimization for the marginalizing and subordination of women by their male partners. Lewis extends this view when she argues that "womanism tends to naturalise stereotypical definitions of masculinity and femininity and argues women in the conventional supportive roles to assist in male-centred struggles against white oppression" (1994:162).

Here is another example of an attempt to redefine what constitutes feminism. Again, what constitutes feminism is being questioned, although it is cast as a critique of Western women.

■ Experience

One of the most hotly contested terrains in South African discourse centres on the role of experience. Put at its simple level, lived experience is privileged particularly by black feminists who argue that only those who have experienced what it is like to be black and oppressed are able (and indeed entitled) to study and write about this (Funani, 1992). This question was examined critically by two white women, Bozalek and Sunde (1993/94), initially when considering the validity of their teaching research methods to black social workers. They posed the question whether they, as white women, could teach adequately how to do research on black women. Subsequently they argued (1993) for the need for an understanding of the "nature of identity", which led them to conclude that "as women from different backgrounds and class positions, we have multiple political identities, and hence sets of priorities which overlap ... We believe that only if

the vast differences between women are acknowledged, commonality may be explored" (Bozalek & Sunde, 1993:36).

Whether this multiplicity of identities provides the tools for examining these questions has yet to be established. However, the valorizing of experience results in an essentialising of certain groups of women, in this case black women,[12] a failing which black feminists often assert white feminists display.

The validity of incorporating women's experience is acknowledged by several people. Hassim and Walker (1992:82) say a "feminist research practice has to integrate women's experiences into its theoretical analysis".

Innovations and new directions

The purpose of this exercise is, ultimately, to identify new directions which may contribute to the development of feminist scholarship in South Africa, a task complicated by the multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary nature of feminist analyses, as the above account indicates. It is clear from the above that there is room for development in each of the areas which have been discussed, and most likely will apply to those areas not covered by this paper.

However, there are some common areas to which attention should be drawn. In the first instance, there is an urgent need to clarify what exactly is meant by feminism. As the discussion above has set out, there is a distinct difference between the women's movement which has been embroiled in liberation struggle and a feminist agenda.[13] So, for example, it is at least questionable whether an analysis which accepts and legitimates women's subordination within familial relations because of political considerations located in male struggle against what is seen as white domination, may be defined as feminist.

Secondly, there is a need to address the split that appears so strong between black and white feminists, in which power relations and the notions of experience are fundamental to the arguments put forward

by the former but not exclusive to them. With regard to the former, what constitutes power, not only in terms of ethnic differences but also in terms of so-called patriarchal relations, requires careful definition by people who employ these concepts.

The explanatory use of the concept of experience is in general problematic. Particularly black feminists argue among other things that only those who have experienced certain situations are competent to study or write about them. The argument is not only circuitous, but also results in a form of essentialism. Harding (1993) terms the use of this concept "ahistorical parochialism", and I would term it closure as it pre-empts any exchange of ideas. Unless part of the experimental group, it is impossible for the social scientist to write about or study such a group, however it is constituted. After all, experience is always mediated by concepts located within the material world, and this in turn will construct the manner in which individuals interpret and make sense of their lives.

This bears upon the work of post-modernists and post-structuralists whose emphasis on multiple identities and the validity of actors' interpretations has an impact on both epistemological and empirical work. It is possible to argue that this results in a fracturing of the accounts of particular social phenomena, a "humanist reduction" which Burawoy (1991) argues is a "suppression of the scientific dimension":

> Here scientific theories are exposed as simply another world view, this time that of the observer, in no way superior to the world view of the participant. Social science is reduced to a dialogue between insider and outsider aimed at mutual self-understanding. In the words of Alain Touraine, sociology becomes a discourse that interprets other discourse, an ideology criticising other ideologies, all the while remaining blind to effective behaviour and situations ... This leads social science down the path of textual analysis, where it merges with literary criticism (Burawoy, 1991:3).

The intensity of the need to redress the worst of apartheid excesses has raised a number of questions relating to the understanding of the specific conditions of former oppressed groups. This in turn introduces the need to assess modes of analysis conducted by those who are seen to have been in positions of power, namely white middle-class feminists. Black feminists in particular refer to the work of foreign black feminists, many of whom live in the Western world. The unintended consequences of pursuing an analysis based on the work of, say, Mohanty who is often quoted, is to generate a situation where being critical of some of the concepts employed by black women becomes personalized and the critic is accused of racism. Kapadia (1995) puts it simply when she says this becomes an area where "angels fear to tread" because of the accusation that the Western feminists are "paternalistic or worse":

> Mohanty warns against "colonisation" in "development" discourse (1991:52) She is right – but it should not be replaced by a cultural "fundamentalism" where non-Third World writers are not allowed to speak ... But if Western feminists offer to stand shoulder to shoulder, with no assumptions of superiority, then surely their help in this fight should be welcomed. For it will be a long fight and a hard one and will need all the intelligence and solidarity that women, East or West, South or North, can muster (Kapadia, 1995:368).

Given the extensive differences that exist between and within particular ethnically and culturally specific groups, any developments must surely take account of overall class differences and how these mediate other differences.

At a more parochial level, there is evidence that many South African feminists have drawn, somewhat eclectically, on those aspects of Western feminists' writing which fits in with their particular concern of the moment. Nor is there evidence that they have defined the way in which they have employed the various theories and/or concepts.

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There may be a taken-for-granted assumption of shared understanding of what analytical tools are used for the moment. Such oversights also should be addressed or at least clarified.

The number of empirical studies is small, and many of them are uninformed by a clear theoretical framework. There is quite clearly a need for extensive empirical studies to be conducted within all fields and for these to be informed by a developed theoretical perspective.

In conclusion there is clearly a great deal of work to be done to develop feminist analyses within the South African context.

Endnotes

1   Yet there is still a great deal of hostility to feminist thought and practices and, indeed, there has been a backlash by women themselves, as for example in America (Roiphe, 1994, Faludi, 1992).

2   Salo (1994:18) is critical of this representation and says: "We need to reread South African historiography carefully in order to understand why some wish to retain seemingly conservative status."

3   The words "gender sensitive" signify a recognition of gender inequalities. However, such recognition does not necessarily imply a feminist concern about how to deal with women's subordination but rather with addressing women's immediate needs, most of which may be tied to poverty and access to work.

4   Moodie, for example in an interesting article co-authored with researcher Vivienne Ndatshe, provided detailed information on migratory labour, family politics and housing preferences at some mines in the Rand. The article did not have a feminist agenda but provides valuable insight into what can be seen as women's primary needs, e.g. their departure from rural areas to meet up with their husbands because of poverty and the needs of their children who "are sick and hungry" (Moodie with Ndatshe, n.d.)

5   A conference on Women and Gender in Southern Africa was held in Durban in 1991. This conference highlighted a number of tensions, some of which were seen as differences between women activists in grassroots movements which may have been "gender sensitive", and academic writers. This took on racial overtones on the grounds that academics are white (when they are not and align themselves with white feminists they tend to be vilified), and have particular power (see Lewis, 1992, who argues that white women have discursive power and therefore effectively silence black women). Bazilli (1991), on the other hand, questions the representation of the split as one between activists and academics. She argues that it was a "feminist political process" which was generated by a

"self-defined group of women who felt uncomfortable and/or angry..."1991:44). She concludes her article by emphasizing the absence of a homogeneous category of woman and the need to acknowledge race, class and gender. Other conferences which have taken place on the African continent have focused on issues such as identity and representation but not necessarily on feminist questions.

6   In this book Clayton provides a useful select bibliography on "the history of South African women and ... the social and political context of their lives.

7   Hassim and Walker (1992:79) point out that among the small number of black women academics few "appear to be engaging publicly with women's/gender studies in their work".

8   It is interesting that British feminist writers are not included. This may reflect on the dominance of American culture in South Africa, which, may partly be accounted for by the strong cultural boycott that operated on the part of the UK against South Africa.

9   None of the work of Afrikaans-speaking feminists has been included here. Further, this review has not included work of women in psychology, political science and other disciplines.

10   Delphy's thesis was rejected by Marxist feminist writers on several grounds and there have been detailed criticisms (see Barrett & McIntosh, 1979).

11   This area of analysis has been the site of considerable controversy concerning the mode of analysis. Women *in* development focused on projects directed towards women, while women *and* development drew attention to women and the role of the economy. There is now a Gender and Development movement for an explication of these differences (see Zwart, 1992).

12   Very similar arguments have been made by radical feminists. In the UK, for example, it has resulted in a major split between feminists. The current debate focuses on pornography (see Segal, 1993).

13   In a forthcoming publication I have presented in greater detail what constitutes the major distinction in South Africa between the women's movement and feminism.

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6

The new rhetoric

Philip Nel

Introduction

During the almost 2 600 years that the concept has been in use, *rhetoric* has had to manoeuvre between two opposites: On the one hand, a tendency to disregard it as the refuge of the untruthful and of the demagogue who wishes to bring an audience to believe or do things they otherwise would not have done. In this usage, *persuasion* — which has always been regarded as the essence of rhetoric — becomes equated with *deception* and *seduction*. On the other hand, proponents have claimed that rhetoric is best seen as *"the whole of man's efforts to discover and share warrantable assent"* (Booth, 1971:106). From this usage (which can be traced back to Aristotle), the study of rhetoric is the study of how people argue to get an adjudicating audience to assent to a controversial claim. Wherever controversy has to be settled on the basis of warrants that can claim no more than probability (e.g. in a court of law, in the political assembly, or when people debate values), the study of rhetoric becomes relevant. From this perspective persuasion, thus, becomes *argumentation*.

During the past two decades or so, this latter perspective on rhetoric as the study of argumentation has again gained in prominence. One reason for this has been the growing distrust towards the totalizing claims made by formal logic — a distrust that relates to a general post-modernist uneasiness with *foundationalist*

enterprises. Another reason has been the tremendous attention that language in all its forms has recently received from scholars. With the rediscovery of the many functions of language has come an appreciation of the *sermonic* qualities of all forms of speaking and writing that are directed at an *audience* of sorts (Weaver, 1970).

The current rhetorical project, hereafter referred to as the *new rhetoric*, is also linked to the recent exploration of the socially constructed nature of all human knowledge and communication, and specifically to the *constructivist project* in the sociology of knowledge. But, whereas the "social construction of knowledge" approach is interested primarily in how the relationship between social actors constitutes, structures and makes meaningful the reality with which the communication is concerned, rhetorical reflection today explicitly focuses attention on how statements are expressed in order to ensure an assenting audience for them. Its central insight is that communication not only communally constitutes a *reference* for discourse. It also constitutes an *audience* which is the ultimate adjudicator of the value (sense, relevance, and truthfulness) of what is being claimed/said. This means that the choice of the subject with which the communication deals, and the manner in which it is dealt with, implies a "selection" of one set of listeners or readers rather than another (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Yet, the "selection" of an audience, rhetoricians claim, also means that a criterion "external" to the intention of the author or speaker, and to the matter under discussion, becomes decisive in the process of communication. Communication succeeds or fails to the extent to which the audience or reader assents to the author/speaker and his/her message. This means that, when communication is concerned with the establishment or transfer of knowledge, the assent of the audience/reader or the withholding of assent, becomes a criterion in the assessment of the epistemic content of the message. Rhetorical analysis is aimed at identifying and assessing those aspects of the text/message which ensure the assent of

the audience/reader, that is to say those things which *persuade* the audience/reader to regard the message as credible. By re-evaluating the concept of the audience/reader, and by focusing on the "aspects of persuasion" (the act as well as the techniques of persuasion) as effected in the practice of communication, the new rhetoric creates a distinctive emphasis within the broader tradition in which knowledge is regarded as socially constructed.

Classical rhetoricians such as Aristotle and Cicero found it useful to consider persuasive communication from three perspectives: the first had to do with the character (*ethos*) of the speaker; the second with the emotional register of the audience (*pathos*); and the third with the content of the arguments used (*logos*). The successful orator is someone who a) gains the trust of the audience, i.e. establishes his or her trustworthiness or competency; b) induces a favourable emotional disposition in the audience; and c) presents arguments with which the audience can identify.

While it is obvious that *pathos* is a feature of the audience, the new rhetoric emphasizes that the other two are also ultimately anchored in the horizon of plausibility entertained by the audience. It is not so much the inherent character of the speaker that determines his *ethos*, but whether his behaviour strikes a responsive chord in the audience. In much the same way *logos* does not refer to something inherent in the arguments used by the speaker or author, but to the assumptions, attitudes and beliefs shared between the speaker and the audience. The practice of actual argumentation takes place in a *rhetorical context* or *situation* – one which is defined primarily by the frame of reference entertained by an audience. Logical analysis of the contents of the arguments used implies an abstraction; one that will be of no use in determining why certain arguments are persuasive despite their formal shortcomings, while formally solid arguments are not necessarily persuasive.

To rectify the blind spot that most of logic had developed for reasoning that persuasively informs judgements, a number of scholars both in Europe and in the USA set out, some thirty years ago, to develop what came to be called *the theory of argumentation*. Of particular importance was Stephen Toulmin's *The use of argument* (first published 1958, but here 1969) in which he turned the tables on logic's exclusion of practical reasoning by redefining logic's prime possession, the syllogism, as only one form – and indeed a misleadingly simplified form – of the genus *argument*. In Belgium, at very much the same time, the philosopher Chaim Perelman and associates rediscovered the concept *argumentation*. While Toulmin focused on the general reasonable practice of "grounding" and "warranting" claims – and thus did not link his concerns initially to that of rhetoric – Perelman explored *argumentation* as a collective noun for all forms of what can be called "practical reasoning". He and his co-author contrasted *argumentation* with *demonstration* (formal proof), and turned to the rhetorical tradition, and in particular to Aristotle, for the tools with which to explore argumentation, which they define in their book *La Nouvelle Rhétorique: Traité de l'Argumentation* (1958 – English translation 1969) as *the* object domain of the rhetorician.[1] In this, they have been followed by a whole generation of "new rhetoricians" who investigate the fascinating and densely populated world of "reasonings" that cannot claim the (somewhat idealized) compelling force of the formal proof or demonstration, but nevertheless back controversial claims by means of publicly accountable warrants. At first, attention was focused on two of the traditional "seats" of arguments in this sense of the word, namely the courts of law and the political assembly, but it soon became clear that all other instances of reasoning about the controversial could also be brought into the focus of a revitalised *new rhetoric*, now reconstituted as a *theory of argumentation*.

On the basis of this short introduction, we can now turn to two applications of the new rhetoric that have elicited some interest from

South African scholars, namely *the rhetoric of inquiry*,[2] and *rhetorical readings of Biblical texts*. By focusing on these two, I do not wish to disparage the use of rhetorical analysis by South African practitioners of communication studies[3] and literary criticism.[4] In both these fields South African scholars are making important contributions to the revival of interest in rhetoric, and a comprehensive review (which this one cannot be) will surely give these contributions their due. My reasons for concentrating on the rhetoric of inquiry and New Testament criticism are simple. I am best acquainted with the first, although I also believe that the rhetoric of inquiry should have a universal appeal for all practising scientists – presumably the primary readers of this book. Furthermore, the rhetoric of inquiry is a project to which scientists,[5] literary critics,[6] philosophers,[7] and communication specialists[8] have contributed, which means that it can serve as an important beacon for the multidisciplinary opportunities created by the new rhetoric. As far as New Testament criticism is concerned, a literature survey that I did in preparing this review has revealed that it has been students of the New Testament who have done the most work (by far) in South Africa in rescuing rhetoric from oblivion.

Applications

The rhetoric of inquiry

One of the most surprising and fascinating applications of the new rhetoric has been in the analysis of scientific discourse. This is surprising because the identity of modern science used to be closely linked with attempts to discourage any practice that can even vaguely be associated with "influencing the disposition of an audience." Such practices may have their place, say in a court of law, on the political podium, or in the competitive world of industry. But science explicitly distinguishes itself from these discursive domains in its commitment to a medium and style of presentation that allow logic and the facts to speak for themselves. The elaborate methods of investigation scientists use, and the style of presentation editors of learned journals

encourage, are geared towards replacing *the human* (scientists and their audience) with *objects* (facts, results, findings) as the causal centre of the world of science.

In what has become known as the rhetoric of inquiry (or *the rhetoric of science*), these ingrained assumptions about science are explicitly challenged. The rediscovery of "persuasion" and "the audience" as a point of reference in the new rhetoric fulfils a heuristic and critical function for a detailed inquiry into how scientists 'really' *reason* with themselves and their colleagues in order to justify controversial claims. This interest, rhetoricians claim, cannot be developed within the confines of the meta-theoretical perspective known as the "logic of inquiry", since it construes an idealized, prescriptive view of science that leaves hardly any place for reasoning that cannot be reduced fully to formal (preferably hypothetico-deductive) logic. Yet, the argumentative needs (and *repertoires*) of scientists are much wider and diverse than are allowed for in the handbooks of scientific methodology. For instance, in the identification of hypotheses, and their testing, scientists also have to consider – and persuade themselves first – of the relative importance of the problem that is going to be studied; whether the hypotheses that will guide the research are fruitful enough to sustain intensive and original research; whether the tests that are considered are stringent enough; whether empirical corroboration is the only desideratum for the acceptance of the theoretical framework from which the hypotheses were deduced; and so on (Pera, 1991:36). The choices that are made to meet these *judgmental* goals depend on the "tacit knowledge" that scientists gain by *doing* science, and by following examples. Equally important, when they are called upon to justify these types of choices, scientists often resort to arguments that are not *reducible* to the validatory principles of a logic of inquiry as it is taught in most handbooks. Hence the need to explore the *rhetoric of inquiry* in distinction, and as a correction, to the *logic of inquiry* (Nelson, Megill & McCloskey, 1987:3-18; Simons, 1990:1-31).

■ Invention, "stasis" and "topoi"

In the scheme of classical rhetoric, *invention* referred to the activity of selecting a particular perspective concerning the theme of the debate/speech, and collecting and considering the available proofs (*pisteis/probationes*) for the chosen perspective. As Cicero defined it, "(i)nvention is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible" (*De Inventione*, I, VII). The first step in this inventive process is to decide *what the issue is.*

The category of *stasis* (Latin = *status*; English = *issue)* refers to the important strategic decisions that face all speakers when they have to prepare to speak on a theme that is bound to generate controversy: how should I interpret the theme in order to gain maximum benefit for the point of view that I want to get across; which aspects of the theme will "fit" my approach, and which will not (the answer will determine where I will tread lightly, and where I will jump in with jackboots). If you choose your perspective wisely, it can ensure that you, and not the opponent, set the agenda for the proceedings.

Status theory used to be applied primarily to legal discourse, where it is obviously crucial for both the prosecution and the defence to determine, before any formal proceedings can start, which approach will benefit the respective cases the best, and what the "issues" are that should be concentrated upon. Status theory thus provided a number of headings under which the orator could search for a *perspective* which would benefit his case the most. For instance, it advised the prospective forensic speaker always to find answers first, before anything else, to questions such as

■ Is there conclusive evidence that the alleged deed was indeed done?
■ How can the deed be defined (was it murder or self-defence)?
■ How should the deed be judged (if it was murder, was it premeditated or not)?
Is this court/jury capable of judging this case?

A significant part of science, unaccounted for by the logic of inquiry (rhetoricians would claim), consists of the arguments that scientists conduct with themselves, and with their colleagues, about questions that are *analogous* to these forensic perspectives. These scientific equivalents may concern questions about the existence or not of a specific sub-atomic particle, and the difference it will make to the research if it is assumed to exist, or not. If something does exist, what should we assume about its character, *and what difference will our assumption make to our research and the type of evidence that will be deemed relevant?* Also: *to whom will we appeal to judge our conclusions – the readers of Scientific American, or the readers of The Journal of Theoretical Physics?* Answers to *strategic* questions such as these are "invented", and cannot be prescribed by methodological rules of say conceptualization and operationalization. For one, *status* issues have already been settled (explicitly or implicitly) once we arrive at these stages of the prescribed method. The ability to make the right – that is, the most fruitful – choice, is an example of that tacit, *personal knowledge* that scientists learn from their mentors, and on the basis of which creativity in science is made possible. Being *strategic*, choices such as these are also fraught with danger, as a record of failed scientific endeavours can attest to.

Quite unforeseen by classical rhetoric, the category of *invention* is central to the success of a rhetoric of inquiry. On it hinges the project of challenging the influential distinction between the so-called *context of discovery* and the *context of justification*. With this distinction Hans Reichenbach, and those that supported his attempt to vindicate the epistemic status of science by means of this distinction, implied that the rational, argumentative, and justificatory aspect of science can be divorced from the intuitive, mostly fortuitous serendipity that characterizes scientific discovery. A rhetorical perspective, in contrast, wishes to point out that scientists also "discover", or better, *invent* arguments which are used to justify those fortuitous intuitions which are the building blocks of new insights and theories.

Classical rhetoric tried to formalize aspects of this process by means of which arguments may be invented, yet this was never intended to act as a substitute for the creativity and originality which distinguished good oratory from the mediocre. Similarly, it seems impossible to devise impersonal rules for the invention of persuasive arguments which are used to justify substantive claims in science. The ability to invent persuasive arguments is part of the experience-based *personal knowledge* that scientists bring to their laboratories and studies.

The identification of potential "dispute issues", important though it may be, does not help prospective *rhetors* to discover how they should argue, nor how to present whatever evidence they have in order to favour their case and minimize the effect of the rejoinders their claim will elicit. In short only, once a *rhetor* has decided what the "issues" (*staseis*) are, does the task of *inventing* arguments begins.

Classical rhetoric emphasized that successful rhetorical proofs (*pisteis*) are based on *topoi*, i.e., customary opinions or beliefs that are more or less widely accepted within a discursive community. In short, *topoi* are the rubrics of the durable ways in which a specific discursive community thinks and values.

Rhetoricians of science believe that classical rhetoric's teaching concerning the *topoi* provides the means to remove the blind spot that the logic of inquiry has for the crucial process whereby arguments in scientific discourse are discovered. *Topoi* theory allows us to analyse the logic of the choices made by scientists when they try to present plausible arguments under conditions of contingency, and thus militates against the conclusion that traditional logic of inquiry shares with romanticism the view that discovery is a purely intuitive process which cannot be reconstructed reasonably.

There are innumerable sets of durable, standard but informal argumentative headings in each branch of science which novices tacitly become acquainted with as they participate in varied argumentative settings. Part of the task of the rhetorician of science

is to make this tacit dimension explicit, in the hope that its conscious incorporation in the science curricula will improve the standards of argumentation and scholarly exchanges. The other task comprises the taxonomy and systematic investigation of the *topoi* that determines the intersubjective discursive horizon of each discipline, and of science in general.

■ *Ethos and the norms of science*

In general, the institutional features of science, and the territorial demarcations that science erects around itself, necessitate that scientists constantly reaffirm their acceptance in the scientific community. This is effected, partly at least, by displaying/enacting those institutional norms that determine what is regarded as science and what not. As Robert Merton has argued, the scientific enterprise bases its status on an exclusiveness that is maintained by the constant re-enactment of specific *norms*. Merton identified six such norms, namely *universalism* (i.e. results should be validated by impersonal, universal criteria); *communality* (research is not a personal possession but belongs to the community of scientists); *disinterestedness* (the only self-interest that can be allowed is the satisfaction of work well done, and the striving for prestige bestowed by colleagues); *organized scepticism* (judgement is suspended pending the results of systematic and repeatable tests); *originality* (the constant desire to gain a competitive edge, and to receive the tangible and intangible rewards of innovation); and *humility* (a restraining norm which prevents scientists sacrificing the first four norms for the sake of the fifth) (Merton, 1973).

Merton's list helps us to appreciate the institutional challenge to individual scientists to establish and maintain their credibility among the community of scientists (see Storer,1966). This challenge cannot be met only by "letting the results speak for themselves". Young, not yet established scientists often have to resort to techniques of persuasion to induce favourable perceptions. Yet evoking appreciation of personal

attributes – especially if they can be linked to the established norms of science in general and/or the special norms of a specific discipline – is also a rhetorical technique used in circumstances where important disputes cannot be resolved owing to the ambiguity of data or to significant differences concerning appropriate methods (Prelli, 1989b:48-53). As in political deliberation and in litigation, so in science: "(W)e more readily and sooner believe reasonable men on all matters in general and absolutely on questions where precision is impossible and two views can be maintained" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a). If scientists can convince their peers of their reasonableness (their compliance with the norms of science), half of the rhetorical battle is won.

■ Style and arrangement

Finally, we should take note of the role that *style* and *arrangement* play in the discourse of science. This remains one of the neglected fields of rhetorical analysis, and it is not difficult to find reasons why this is the case. Firstly, the classical rhetorical notion of *invention* has proven such a seminal category for the rhetoric of inquiry in its attempts to overcome the limits of a traditional logic of inquiry that one cannot blame rhetoricians for spending most of their time analysing the fascinating variety of arguments that are invented by scientists. Secondly, contemporary rhetoricians have fought relatively shy of the belletristic categories of style and arrangement, since these were in the past made into the main focus of a rhetoric that was built on a strict distinction between content and form – the latter, as Peter Ramus taught, being the domain of the rhetorician.

As David Lodge (a chemist turned rhetorician) claims, the style of scientific discourse can be interpreted as the rhetoric whereby science has institutionalized itself (Locke, 1992:90). This style has a number of distinct features, among which the most important is that scientific prose has increasingly become an "agentless prose," where the passive voice dominates, verbs are nominalized, and qualities are reified. While

"natural languages" privilege persons, the language of science privileges physical objects by translating it into processes, happenings, events that become the causal centre of the world (Gross, 1990:70). It is as if scientific style — guarded over by the editors of disciplinary journals — is increasingly being re-articulated to obscure the subject of science — the author, the experimenter, the scholar. A distinct, disinterested style is surely functional, given science's striving for objectivity. And one can defend the point that it is among other things, by means of a rhetoric that institutionalizes the distinctiveness of science, and the "expert culture" that goes with it, that science protects its "norms of validity from reduction to the presently useful and politically expedient" (Dillon,1991:8). What the rhetoric of inquiry wants to achieve, though, is for science to becomes aware of its own rhetoric (and stop refusing to accept that it does practice rhetoric), and for it to realize that the "functional objectivity" of scientific prose can become the ideological justification for the dehumanizing impersonality of "technoscience" (Latour, 1987:174). This means, for instance, that the claim that the language of science is (or, should be) objective — in the sense of completely impersonal — because science itself is objective, should be reconsidered since it may amount to confusing cause with effect (Locke, 1992:91). The impersonality of science is a rhetorical creation that has been used, and is still used, to defend a privileged monopoly that science has on the concept of "knowledge". This epistemological and political effect is supported by the way in which the use of tables, figures and statistics contributes towards the reification of operationalized constructs by positing or suggesting causal relationships, thus transforming "the terms of science into theoretically important physical objects and events" (Gross,1990:75). In this respect, the language and style of science also play a crucial *ontological* role.

This mixture of epistemological, ontological and *political* functions performed by the scientific text can be illustrated by means of an analysis of the arrangement of the *experimental report* or *paper*. Here I

have in mind not only the typical experimental report found in the natural sciences, but also the behaviourist model that is actively promoted by the American Psychology Association's *Publication Manual* as the "correct" style and arrangement of the scientific paper. As Charles Bazerman (1987) shows, this *manual* (more than 200 pages long) has become quite influential, also outside of the domain of psychology, since most "American" social sciences such as sociology and political science have historically modelled themselves on behaviouralist psychology.

The traditional arrangement of the experimental paper − 1. Introduction, 2. Methods and materials, 3. Results, and 4. Discussion (an arrangement that has become the model also for many other non-experimental modes of science, except that 2. is replaced with *conceptualization* and *operationalization*) − is a thoroughly Baconian construction based on the belief that induction is the hallmark of science. Its purpose is to create "a picture of the discovery process as a path-like sequence of logical steps toward the revelation of a hitherto unknown phenomenon" (Woolgar, 1981:263), or as Gross so aptly says, it "recapitulates a movement from the contingency of laboratory events to the necessity of natural processes" (Gross,1990:86). The function of the arrangement of the scientific paper thus amounts to a double fiction, the first being that the paper itself is a "true" reflection of the way the experiments were conducted. As such, the experimental paper conforms to and confirms the principle of replication − the belief that experimental science stands and falls on the criterion whether an investigation can be objectively repeated. The principle of replication, while still widely subscribed to as one of the criteria "good science" should conform to, has been found to be somewhat problematic. Two points have been made in this regard: a) that scientists have very little interest in replicating other people's work (Collins, 1975), and b) that it is virtually impossible to replicate any experiment owing to the often idiosyncratic tacit knowledge on which the imaginative and skilful experimenter relies (Cole,1992:13-14).

The second fiction that the arrangement of the scientific paper creates is that the experimental process is one that proceeds on inductive principles, where it is experimental results that lead to generalizations and theoretical constructs, and not the other way round. In calling it a fiction, I am not suggesting that it is necessarily a false picture that is being created, only that it should be rhetorically appreciated for what it is – a literary construct, one that reproduces scientists' deep belief in the inductive method.

The above, then, are a few of the ways in which the *rhetoric of inquiry* approach adds further depth to the project started by Kuhn, Hanson, Lakatos and Feyerabend of re-establishing science as a "human" enterprise. While not all proponents of the rhetoric of inquiry would agree that we need to drop *all* distinctions between science and other enterprises of the mind, many would endorse this sentiment expressed by Alan Gross:

> (A)s rhetorical analysis proceeds unabated, science may be progressively revealed not as the privileged route to certain knowledge but as another intellectual enterprise, an activity that takes its place beside, but not above, philosophy, literary criticism, history, and rhetoric itself (Gross, 1990:3).

New Testament criticism: from the interpretation of rhetoric to the rhetoric of interpretation

For various reasons, New Testament criticism has during this century proven to be extremely receptive to new theoretical and interpretative approaches such as structuralism, historical criticism, hermeneutics, and reader-response criticism. It came as no surprise, therefore, that New Testament scholars were among the first to make use of a revitalized rhetoric to complement, and in some cases to relativize, their traditional attempts to interpret the New Testament better to a secularized world. Although this was clearly not the only incentive, reader-response analyses of texts during the 1970s played a very important role in sensitizing the New Testament scholarly

community to the centrality of the audience as a reference point in interpretative endeavours. As I will show below, these scholars are today exploring a double denotation for the concept of *the audience*: on the one hand, the implied or explicit audiences to whom New Testament books were originally directed are used as an important interpretative key to unlock the meaning of the texts at hand. On the other hand, these scholars are also aware that contemporary interpretations of Biblical texts are also directed at an audience, and that this implies scholars will have to take responsibility for their interpretations. In short: New Testament scholars are today using rhetorical analysis in order to *contextualize* their interpretative activities in the fullest sense of the word.

For the rhetorician, thus, contextualizing New Testament texts implies that the interpreter must reconstruct the discursive relations constituted by the rhetorical situation in each text. These relations are not "willed", so to speak, by the author (as is suggested by subject-centred approaches), nor are they constituted by the text and its discourse (structuralism and post-structuralism), but are fundamentally structured by the frame of reference of the audience with which the author wishes to engage. Furthermore, it is not enough simply to identify the genre of a specific text (although the fact that Paul's writings are in the form of letters is an extremely important *datum*). One has to trace how the author employs the genre to establish a relationship of trust and credibility with his audience, and how the arguments used are structured to engage the shared attitudes, beliefs and values of the audience, not simply to reinforce them, but to use them as a common platform for the "warranted assent" that the author wishes to effect in the audience.

This approach has been used with illuminating results by scholars such as Combrink (1992; 1994), Joubert (1992), Snyman (1986; 1988; 1989; 1992), Pelser (1992), Vorster (1990; 1992), and Lategan (1992). But perhaps one of the most revealing examples of the approach is to

be found in Botha's extensive study of Romans 13: 1-7, in which Paul among other things admonishes his readers to obey the state as an institution of God (Botha, 1994). Using a wide array of classical rhetorical techniques, Botha succeeds in contextualizing this passage within Paul's strategy to gain the cooperation of the implied audience in Rome for his broader missionary work, on the basis of the evocation of values and beliefs that Paul believes his audience shares by means of the classical argumentative tool, the *enthymeme* (an argumentative construction in which one of the premises is left unexpressed, but is "filled in" by the audience – see Aristotle, 1991). The contextualization that Botha effects on the Pauline text in turn implies a relativization of Paul's exhortations in the passage, to the extent that the rhetorical situation in which it was expressed cannot simply be universalized or detemporalized.

A sensitivity to the rhetorical situation of the texts that one studies cannot but leave one vulnerable to the fundamental self-referential implication of rhetorical criticism. If meaning is constituted, even only partially, by the interaction between author and audience within a specific rhetorical situation, all *meaning products*, including rhetorical analysis itself, can be rhetorically analysed. This means that the act of interpretation itself has to be challenged by asking such questions as *to whom is it addressed*, and *what are my responsibilities as an agent of interpretation towards my audience*? To their credit, South African theologians have not shied away from this self-referential challenge, precisely because their discipline has been caught up for so long in the demagogy both of apartheid and its vociferous opponents. Under the heading of *the ethics of interpretation*, scholars such as Smit (1990a; 1990b; 1991), De Villiers (1989), and Botha (1992;1994) have, under the influence of Schüssler Fiorenza (1988) and Wuellner (1989), taken up the challenge of exploring how different interpretative approaches contribute towards the constitution and legitimation of relations of power and domination.

Challenges

While still very much in its infancy, rhetorical scholarship in South Africa has already made some significant contributions. One hopes that these contributions will increase, and that scholars will explore the theoretical and meta-theoretical insights that a rhetorical perspective on and in their disciplines can produce. I look forward to the day when South African scholars fully take up the challenges presented by rhetoricians in diverse fields such as *literary studies* (e.g. Burke, 1950; Booth, 1974), natural sciences,[9] in law (Kratochwil, 1989; White, 1987), psychology (Bazerman, 1987; Carlston, 1987), economics (Klamer, 1987; McCloskey, 1983), mathematics (Davis and Hersch, 1987), and political science (Nelson, 1983; 1987, 1993). What is of great importance here is that a rhetorical perspective makes many of the boundaries between the natural sciences and the humanities redundant.

At the same time, though, we should not close our eyes to the limits of the rhetorical project. Unfortunately "rhetoric" has become something of a fashionable word, and it is already being used in a wide variety of meanings, not all of which are true to the rhetorical tradition. One manifestation of this is the way in which theologians such as Wuellner (1989) and Smit (1991) extend the concept to cover very much the same field as that which *discourse analysis* can occupy more comprehensively and thoroughly. While there is a sense in which a self-conscious rhetorical analysis of Biblical texts must ask questions about its own contribution to relations of power and domination (as I explained above), the question remains whether the categories of rhetorical analysis are adequate to deal with such relations. My feeling is that they are not, and that rhetoric should not try and usurp the responsibilities of discourse analysis.

In the same vein, the *new rhetoric* needs to be constantly reminded of the fact that its concern is and should be a particular domain of discourse, namely the *persuasive*. Although the new rhetoric has

opened our eyes to examples of persuasion in settings where it traditionally was not expected to be found, this does not mean that all discourse suddenly becomes persuasive or that all persuasive discourse is persuasive in exactly the same way. The desire of Perelman and his followers to "rescue" rhetoric by turning it into a theory of argumentation – helpful as it has otherwise been – unfortunately encourages a blurring of the boundaries between argumentation based on persuasion, and argumentation where the resulting conviction does not depend exemplarily (as in mathematical proof) on the *ethos* of the speaker or the *pathos* of the audience. Maybe these two forms of argumentation are not hermetically isolated from one another, but this does not imply that the analytical tools of rhetoric are per definition best suited to deal with argumentation *tout court*. As I have argued elsewhere, the not so subtle encroachment of rhetoric on the domains of formal and informal logic, philosophy and discourse analysis may be traced to Perelman's definition in which argumentation and persuasion become one and the same thing (Nel, 1994; 1995). To rectify this, and in the process to protect the integrity of rhetoric both from those that would like to sanitize it as *mere* argumentation, and from those who would like to vilify it as *mere* seduction, is today the biggest challenge facing the rhetorical project.

Endnotes

1   As Perelman would later come to summarize his life's work: "(t)he new rhetoric is a theory of argumentation" (Perelman, 1990[1982]:1083).

2. See Salazar (1993); Nel (1994).

3   See, for instance, De Wet (1990a, 1990b, 1991), Swanepoel (1991) Terblanche (1989), Bredenkamp (1989).

4   See Van Niekerk (1992); Cornelius (1994); Odendaal (1991); Michell (1989).

5   See Gross (1990), for instance.

6   Dillon (1991); Locke (1992); Salazar (1993).

7   Weimer (1977).

8   Overington (1977); Prelli (1989a & 1989b).

9   See the collection of articles in Pera & Shea (1991) and in Simons (1990).

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7

Explanatory power and truth: The promise of critical realism in theology

Daniel P. Veldsman

"There is no sense in which subatomic particles are to be graded as 'more real' than, say, a bacterial cell or a human person, or, even, social facts (or God?)" (Peacocke, 1984:36).

Introduction

To state: "God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ for our salvation" is not to make a theological statement which merely wants to be existentially useful. It is to make a statement which wants to and can be held as true, and, in intent, wants to make a credible or valid universal assertion about reality. Is this possible and acceptable, and if so, how?

This question, "Can it be claimed that religious assertions are true, and how?" poses a very special kind of challenge to theologians labouring on the one hand in the dawn of the enormous worldwide socio-cultural changes of the 21st century, and on the other hand in the somewhat arrogantly cast – albeit epistemologically uninformed – shadow of the flattering success of the natural sciences.[1] The apt words of Solzhenitsyn in his 1983 Templeton Prize address, are a stern reproach in this regard: "Material laws alone do not explain our life

and give it direction." The American biologist Loren Eisely (1978:120-1) earlier voiced the same reproach:

It is not sufficient any longer to listen at the end to the rustlings of galaxies; it is not enough even to examine the great coil of DNA in which is coded the very alphabet of life. These are our extended perceptions. But beyond lies the great darkness of the ultimate Dreamer, who dreamed the light and the galaxies. Before act was, or substance existed, imagination grew in the dark. Man partakes of that ultimate wonder and creativeness. As we turn from the galaxies to the swarming cells of our being, which toils for something, some entity beyond their grasp, let us remember man, the self-fabricator who came across an ice age to look into the mirrors and the magic of science. Surely he did not come to see himself or his wild visage only. He came because he is at the heart a listener and a searcher for some transcendent realm beyond himself. This he has worshipped by many names, even in the dismal caves of the beginning. Man, the self-fabricator, is so by reason of gifts he had no part in devising.

Both religion, as the older voice on the meaning of life, and science (physics, chemistry, geology, biological and medical sciences, etc.), as the younger voice nurturing the quality of life and technology, grapple with the fundamental question: What's for real? Both religion and science have distinctive tarnished images in addressing their respective callings – the latter since its fall in the post-Kuhnian phase from epistemological innocence, the former since its first and thereafter ongoing "banishment from paradise". The contemporary philosophic-theological endeavour of grappling with the fundamental question on reality and truth has been labelled in the post-Kuhnian phase with the catchword *critical realism*.

Critical realism, as a proposed and promising epistemological theory of rationality for theology, has developed in close conjunction and critical dialogue with scientific realism, since the post-Kuhnian philosophy of science has convincingly shown that there can be no

sharp line of demarcation between scientific rationality and any other forms of rationality (cf. Van Huyssteen, 1989:47-57; 1993b:114-115; 1995).

However, wherein lies the promise of critical realism in theology? The promise of critical realism can be translated into the pressing question: "Can theology still speak out contextually in such a credible manner that the liberating voice of the gospel may be heard loudly and clearly in all facets of our society?" (Van Huyssteen, 1989:x; cf. Maree, 1992:373).

To this question, critical realism directively proposes an exciting, albeit provisional, answer. Many interrelated and diverse socio-historic factors in the Western world, and to some extent also in South Africa, have contributed to this development and the urgency of addressing aspects of this question; enormous socio-cultural changes; pluralism in society and Christianity; dialogue among the religions of the world; addressing forms of systemic oppression; the appropriation of traditions (such as the hermeneutic quest, including literary and anthropological theories of interpretation); secularization.

■ In the light of the foregoing, the following three questions will be addressed:
■ What are we talking about when we talk about realism?
■ What is the relationship between scientific realism and critical realism?
■ What does critical realism entail, and what does it promise?

These questions will be addressed mainly from the contemporary writings of Wentzel van Huyssteen, who is the most prominent and pioneering South African theologian on critical realism (cf. Krüger 1987:64; Mouton, Van Aarde, & Vorster, 1988:3; Smit, 1988:91; Maree, 1992:373-4). Van Huyssteen, formerly Professor of Systematic Theology and head of the Department of Biblical Studies, University of Port Elizabeth, has since 1992 been the James I. McCord Professor of Theology and Science, Princeton Theological Seminary, United States of America.

Historical-philosophical perspective on scientific realism

Realism as an an epistemological theory of rationality opposes two other influential philosophical models. It stands over against idealism and clashes with phenomenalism. In the early history of philosophy, particularly in medieval thought, the term "realism" was used for the doctrine that universals have a real, objective sense. In modern philosophy, however, it is used for the view that material objects exist externally to us and independently of our sense experience (Hirst, 1972:77). Idealism, which was the dominant Western philosophy at the close of the nineteenth century, holds that no such material objects or external realities exist apart from our knowledge or consciousness of them, the whole universe thus being dependent on the mind or in some sense mental. Phenomenalism, on the other hand, denies that material objects exist except as groups or sequences of sense, actual and possible. Thus realism, in its insistence on externality and independence is opposed to idealism and clashes with phenomenalism. Whereas idealism and phenomenalism respectively cannot deliver on all their promises, realism as philosophical model has blossomed. Since the beginning of the twentieth century there has been an great upsurge of different forms of realism,[2] and today, especially since the Kuhnian scientific revolution,[3] there seems to be almost as many scientific realisms as there are scientific realists (cf. Peacocke, 1984:29). However, after decades of positivism (Van Huyssteen, 1988a:250; 1989:3-10; 1993b:115) and the threat of relativism, scientific realism can be seen as one of the most remarkable and welcome features of the scientific thought of our time (Peacocke, 1984:22; cf. Burham, 1985:28). But what does it entail?

The promise of scientific realism

Scientific realism is so called because it makes a proposal with regard to science and not because it is "scientific" in any other sense. Scientific realism is scientific because it proposes a thesis in regard to

science (McMullin, 1984:16). It is basically a philosophical position (Peacocke, 1984:22-3) in which the scientist claims that s/he is in a creatively discovering and exploring the structures of the world,[4] and being constructive and inventive.

In scientific realism, the notion of explanatory success is central, as is the view that there is good reason to believe in the existence of entities substantially like those postulated by theories that have been successful over a long period of time.[5] The following qualified description of scientific realism by Ernan McMullin can be taken as a responsible and respresentative description of this position (cf. Peacocke, 1984:24; Van Huyssteen, 1988a:250):

> The basic claim made by scientific realism once again is that the long-term success of a scientific theory gives reason to believe that something like the entities and structures postulated in the theory actually exists. There are four important qualifications built into this: (1) the theory must be successful over a significant period of time; (2) the explanatory success of the theory gives some reason, though not conclusive warrant, to believe [it]; (3) what is believed is that the theoretical structures are *something like* the structures of the real; (4) no claim is made for a special, more basic, privileged form of existence for the postulated entities (McMullin, 1986:26).

This implies the following (cf. Van Huyssteen, 1988a:250):

- Realism commits one to saying that there are good reasons but not that there are compelling grounds. The logical possibility that even a highly successful theory might be false should be held open.
- Any theory may therefore develop further and can in principle be revised and sharpened.
- Only theories that have already shown a considerable degree of explanatory power would qualify as having reliable ontological implications.
- The success of a theory suggests truth and never entails truth.

Therefore, the success of a theory in scientific realism does not warrant the claim that something corresponding exactly to this construct exists. The success of a theory can at best warrant a claim that an entity possessing the properties attributed to it by the theory exists (for example, an atom/electron or the Big Bang theory). This accounts not only for the notion of approximate truth in realism but also for the central role of metaphors in scientific theorizing. Not only are even the most literal-sounding terms theory-laden, but since they are provisional they must be regarded as metaphoric. Metaphors are epistemologically indispensable as they not only illuminate something not well understood in advance but are also distinctive modes of achieving insight. The explanatory power or success of a theory depends on the effective (or "fertile") metaphors it can call upon. Theories – and their metaphors – thus provide epistemic access to entities that could not have been known otherwise (Van Huyssteen, 1988a:250; 1989:153; 1993b:132-3).

But what does this imply for theology, and specifically for theological reflection in South Africa?

The promise of critical realism in theology

"Because we are *critical* realists, we must take this perspective on the world afforded by physics and cosmology seriously but not too literally" (Peacocke, 1984:60).

Realism is of course very appealing for theologians as it is *on the one hand* rather obvious that Christians have traditionally been realists[6] in one form or another. Although the scientific and theological enterprises share alike the tools of groping humanity, namely words, ideas, and images that have been handed down and which we refashion in our own way for our own times in the light of present-day experiences (Peacocke, 1984:51), they do not deal with the same reality, but for the most part deal with different domains of the same reality (cf. Van Huyssteen, 1988a:252). "Realism" in critical realism

thus refers to the attempt at making reliable cognitive claims about domains of reality that lie beyond our experience but to which interpreted experience is our only epistemic access (Van Huyssteen, 1992:6). There is however, *on the other hand*, a double-edged responsibility which has to be addressed by a critical-realist position in theology[7] if it wants to be true to its name as being *critical*. Elaboration on two points is necessary here: What double-edged responsibility does critical realism entail, and what does critical mean in this context?

Firstly, the double-edged responsibility of critical realism implies that it has to transcend the intellectual coma of fideism and dogmatism (Van Huyssteen, 1988a:247) — that is (to put it in epistemological terms), theological reflection must overcome its fundamentalist and naive approaches to (biblical and societal) realities. Such approaches are imprisoned by their unself-critical and manipulative confessionalism, and are largely intolerant of other approaches. Furthermore, they often ignore and/or resent dialogue between different religious traditions and religions as well as between religion and science. The second edge of its responsibility, strengthened by its insistence that both the objects of science and the objects of religious belief lie beyond the range of literal description (Van Huyssteen, 1988a:251), is to take its relationship to science seriously, although in a qualified sense, as science can still be seen as our best available example of human rationality at work (Van Huyssteen 1995:40). This does not mean that science or scientific rationality is in any way superior to other modes of rationality. It does mean that (1) theological reflection shares with the scientist the crucial role of being a rational agent, and of having to make the best possible judgements within a specific context, and within and for a specific community. Furthermore, it has to acknowledge (2) the experiential and interpretative dimension of all our knowledge, and (3) it has to take care not to succumb to the epistemological fallacy, that is, the fallacy of drawing direct inferences from contemporary science for theological doctrine.[8] Lastly (4) it has

to acknowledge the fact that neither science nor theology can ever have demonstrably certain foundations.

Secondly, critical refers in this instance to the insight that whatever we say about God, (wo)man, society, ethics, etc. is determined by the "who" of the discourse. Or, stated differently in the words of Polanyi (1962:322): "Our believing is conditioned at its source by our belonging." However, this does not imply that theologians can suspend their criteria for a model that might guide it rationally as well as contextually. On the contrary, theologians must be able to show why they believe their statements to be true to reality, and why those statements are indeed relevant and topical in their own socio-cultural context.[9] Thus theologians are compelled not only to acknowledge the inevitable role that their personal commitment plays in theological reflection, but are also compelled to retain the openness and provisionality of what is stated.

Our introductory question restated

If our introductory question, "Can theology still speak out contextually in such a credible manner that the liberating voice of the gospel may be heard loudly and clearly in all facets of our South African society?" is addressed within this context, then we (a) have to spell out what form of realism would be appropriate for theology, and (b) formulate criteria for a credible theological model that would also be valid from a philosophy of science point of view.

Van Huyssteen (1988a:251; 1992) argues for a qualified and weak form of critical realism in theology, that is, a realism that does not offer a strong defence of theism, but deals with the cognitive claims of religious language and theological reflection. In short: The critical realist in theology will have to say *how religious language can claim to be about God at all* (Van Huyssteen, 1988a:251). In answer to this question, Van Huyssteen (1988a:258; 1988b:84-89; 1989:146ff.) formulates three criteria:

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- the reality depiction of theological statements
- the critical and problem-solving ability of theological statements
- the constructive and progressive nature of theological statements

The three criteria can be more fully represented depicted as follow. *Firstly:* Reality depiction is understood by Van Huyssteen (1989:147-172) in two different senses, namely as *cognitivity* (that is, the anticipated reality of God in our theological language and the role of the subjectivity of the theologian making those relational theological statements)[10] and as *contextuality* (that is, the concrete and actual socio-cultural context or contexts — especially the contexts of religious experience, the church and theological reflection — in which theology has to find, identify and try to solve its problems).

Secondly: Theological statements must be able critically to identify and analyse real problems and to formulate theories that might provide valid and adequate solutions to those problems (cf. Van Huyssteen, 1989:172-190). Three criteria serve as guideline for problem-solving in theology, namely the Bible, the tradition of Christian reflection and contemporary scientific thought. All theological problems, be they *empirical* (such as ethical questions, for example abortion) or *conceptual* (which may be an internal or external conceptual problem such as the Trinity or baptism), are determined largely by context. The ability to solve theological problems — no matter how provisionally — may well be the crux of a model of progress for theology.[11]

Thirdly: For Van Huyssteen (cf. 1989:190-197), theological progress simply means renewed but also better understanding of the biblical message in each new context or problem situation. Within the South African context, the heresy of apartheid as empirical problem, and the Reformed concept of inspiration as internal conceptual problem, are good examples of significant changes which have occurred in our theological tradition through the modification or revision of a certain central theory or theories. Such progress may occur as paradigmatic shifts as well as through natural development and broadening. The

crux of progress is the responsible, creative and constructive nurturing of the ongoing process of disclosing permanent possibilities for human existence, both personal and communal, in awe and amazement before the Reality on Whom we reflect in anticipation, and in Whom we believe.

Promising?

Faith does not, in the realist, spring from the miracle but the miracle from faith. If the realist once believe, then he is bound by his very realism to admit the miraculous also (Dostoevsky).

Up to this day, critical realism has not quite established itself as a theory of explanation, but is rather a very promising and suggestive hypothesis, struggling for credibility while being at the centre of the discussion of models of rationality (Van Huyssteen, 1988a:251). However, the promises are exciting for a progressive post-apartheid society which, on the one hand, has to come to terms theologically with its imperialistic-exclusivistic heritage, and on the other hand, has to address real pluralism realistically and inclusively (not only between different religions, but also between different models of rationality) as well as a wide spectrum of pressing socio-cultural concerns and ethical issues (such as justice, violence, abortion and poverty).

Endnotes

1   Cf. Peacocke, 1984:13. With this formulation, I have in mind the rejection by many natural scientists of the theological enterprise as being nonsensical. As example can be stated the recent controversy regarding the founding of a chair in Science and Religion at Cambridge University, England to which many British natural scientists not only raised their doubts, but openly rejected the significance of such a chair. However, see Peacocke's (1984:41-44, 50-53) short summary of the similarities and differences between theological and scientific models, as well as the exposition of Van Huyssteen (1995:3-5) in which he lists the most important stereotypes of the science and religion debate as well as the characteristics of the foundationalist approach to empirical science.

2   Realism has taken on many forms. Hirst (1972:78-83) notes the following distinctive forms: direct realism (naive, perspective and common-sense realism)

and indirect realism (representative and critical realism). See Peacocke (1984:14-34) for a very helpful but short historical overview.

3   The seminal work of Thomas Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (1962, 2nd ed. 1970), in which he focuses on the historical development of scientific theories, rates as one of the most original and influential alternatives yet to the positivist scientific tradition (cf. Peacocke 1984:17-18). For a good overview of this development and of relevant literature, see Van Huyssteen, 1989:47-67.

4   The classical realist paradigm originated in direct relation to the natural sciences. For excellent essays on different aspects of scientific realism, see Leplin (1984). It has now become the task of scientists from other fields to evaluate the inherent creative possibilities of this position for the other sciences. Important work on realism in the social sciences is at present being done by philosophers of science such as Bhaskar, Keat, Urry and Sayer.

5   A stern warning however, which should at all times be heeded by realists, and for that matter by critical realists in theology, is that realism is not a blanket approval for all the entities postulated by long-supported theories of the past (see Van Huyssteen 1989:151).

6   See the context in which Peacocke (1984:50) goes so far as actually to state: "(T)he Christian mystic is your true critical realist."

7   At the same time Van Huyssteen (1988a:251) warns against an uncritical, superficial transferring of the realism of science to the domain of religious belief, and to theology as the reflection on the claims of this belief. The reason is that critical realism is not yet quite an established theory of explanation, but rather a very promising and suggestive hypothesis, struggling for credibility. However, since the 1980s a few theologians have grasped the enormous potential of scientific realism for theology. Important work has been published by theologians such as Sallie McFague, Arthur Peacocke, Janet Soskice. Within the South African context, apart from the writings of Van Huyssteen, only a few works have concentrated specifically on critical realism such as the doctoral dissertations of David Maree, *Kritiese rasionalisme en teologie* (1991) and Ben du Toit, *Text and experience: A comparative study of American religious empiricism and critical realism* (1993). However, a few more short articles on critical realism have already been published. See especially in this regard Mouton, Van Aarde & Vorster (1988) for literature.

8   An example can make this point clearer. It would be a serious category mistake to infer directly from the Big Bang theory to creation. The Big Bang theory does not entitle us to infer — theologically or otherwise — an absolute beginning in time (cf. Van Huyssteen 1995:15).

9   See especially the criticism of Smit (1988:105-110) on Van Huyssteen in this regard, in which he states that the critical account of faith is not critical enough.

10 See the criticism by Krüger (1987:67) with regard to Van Huyssteen's understanding of the role of personal commitment in theological reflection.

11 See the call by Naude (1988:142-150) for refinement in Van Huyssteen's understanding of problem-solving as criterion for theological reflection.

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8

Comparative religious studies

David Chidester

Introduction

Comparative Religious Studies – the open, plural, intercultural, and interdisciplinary study of religion – is an academic discipline of considerable relevance for a changing South Africa. In general terms, Comparative Religious Studies can provide two important social benefits.

First, it develops methods for gaining an empathetic understanding of religious difference that can serve as the basis for reducing prejudice and expanding civil toleration in a common society. Living in a country of such rich religious diversity, but with a history of misunderstanding, separation and discrimination on the basis of religion, South Africans will increasingly require the resources of Comparative Religious Studies in the emerging multi-religious and multicultural contexts of the classroom, the workplace, the civil service and other areas of public life.

Second, Comparative Religious Studies develops modes of critical analysis that can clarify the role of religion in the larger society. By analyzing the meaning and power of religious discourses and practices, Comparative Religious Studies explores the relation between religion and the many social formations of community and conflict in South Africa. As a result, Comparative Religious Studies provides critical

insights into the force of religious symbols, myths and rituals in the production of a new nation.

Historical background

The modern terms "religion" and "religions" emerged in Western cultures out of a long historical struggle with religious diversity. In its ancient Roman usage, the term "religion" indicated an authentic way of acting, with reverent attention to detail, especially in the performance of ritual. That authentic way of acting, however, was defined in opposition to "superstition," a type of action that was allegedly motivated by ignorance or fraud (Benveniste, 1973:522). Religion belonged to "us"; but superstition was attributed to "them". From the beginning, therefore, the term "religion" was located within intercultural relations of difference (Byrne, 1989; Despland and Vallée, 1992; W.C. Smith, 1962; Despland, 1979; Feil, 1986).

In Southern Africa, the opposition between religion and super-stition was a consistent feature of European reflections on intercultural contact. In 1804, for example, the missionary J.T. van der Kemp reported that Xhosa-speaking people in the Eastern Cape had no religion but an abundance of superstitions (1804:432). Similar denials were reported on every frontier. In the twentieth century, the denial of the designation "religion," to indigenous African religious heritage was perpetuated by academic experts, such as W.M. Eiselen, who argued in the 1920s that Africans might have forms of belief (*geloofsvorme*) but lacked the necessary level of cultural evolution to have developed a religion (*godsdiens*) (1924/25). Therefore, from nineteenth-century missionaries to twentieth-century academics, the term "religion" has been employed in oppositional projects of religious affirmation and denial.

The term "religions" has also been extremely problematic. In English, the first use of the plural term occurred in 1593 when the Protestant theologian Richard Hooker distinguished between two

religions, Protestant and Roman Catholic (Harrison, 1990:39). By the eighteenth century, European thinking about religious diversity had generally settled upon four religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Paganism (Pailin, 1984). In 1870, when F. Max Müller gave his foundational lectures on the comparative "science of religion" at the Royal Institution in London, the list of religions" had expanded to eight, with the significant remainder, however, of what Max Müller called religions without books" (1873:116). Turning to reports from colonized lands for evidence of "religions without books", Max Müller and other nineteenth-century scholars expanded the concept of religions to include a wide range of indigenous religious life (see Sharpe, 1986).

In the process, European scholars relied heavily upon reports from South Africa provided by local philologists, ethnographers, and comparativists, such as W.H.I. Bleek, Henry Callaway, Theophilus Hahn, and H.A. Junod, who became internationally recognized scholars of comparative religion. As a result of that interchange, comparative religion became familiar in South Africa: Henry Callaway published his *Fragment on comparative religion* in 1874; new developments in the field were reviewed in local periodicals; and W.C. Willoughby taught the subject at the Native Institution of Tiger Kloof (Callaway, 1874; Anonymous, 1899; Willoughby, 1912). Even an official report submitted to the Colonial Secretary of the Cape of Good Hope recommended the knowledge that could be gained by "the dangerous resources of Comparative Religion" (Van Oordt, 1907:5).

Although a kind of Comparative Religious Studies was practised in South Africa during the nineteenth century by European travellers, missionaries, settlers, colonial agents and indigenous Africans, no university department made provision for the subject (Jordan, 1905:580). The neglect of Comparative Religious Studies continued through most of the twentieth century. In the 1940s, while strong departments of Comparative Religious Studies were emerging

internationally, from the University of Chicago to the University of Ibadan, no similar development in teaching and research occurred in South African universities (see McKenzie, 1989; Platvoet, 1989). During the 1960s, as university departments proliferated all over the world, South Africa failed to develop similar programmes.

In part, the reason for this delay in the development of Comparative Religious Studies can be attributed to two aspects of state policy during the apartheid era: First, financial support and exclusive privilege was awarded to theological education, especially ministerial training for the Dutch Reformed Church, in which comparative religion was absorbed as a sub-field of Christian missions. Incorporated in exclusively Christian programmes of theological education, Comparative Religious Studies could not emerge as a subject in its own right. Second, educational policy that mandated Bible-based religious education in public schools distorted the development of university departments by only granting teaching credits for courses in Biblical Studies. Accordingly, as students preparing for a teaching career were inhibited from taking any other courses in the study of religion, university departments became overstaffed in exclusively Christian theological and biblical pro-grammes.

Despite these obstacles, three structural advances in Comparative Religious Studies were firmly in place by the 1990s: Most universities in the country had an academic department or programme in the subject; a professional society, the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa, supported by the *Journal for the Study of Religion*, had been in operation since 1979; and co-operative ventures had been undertaken by organized research units, such as the research unit for the study of New Religious Movements and Independent Churches (NERMIC), the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (ICRSA), and the Religion and Social Change Unit (RESCU), that all received financial support from the Centre for Science Development. Within these organizational structures, Com-

parative Religious Studies had found a home in South Africa at the beginning of the democratic era (see Prozesky, 1990).

Epistemology and method

In his 1870 lectures, Max Müller insisted that the study of religion must be comparative, because, borrowing Goethe's aphorism about the study of language, whoever knows one knows none. Knowledge about religion — as a human phenomenon, a human project, and a human problem — can only begin by engaging two or more religions. From that epistemological premise, Max Müller pursued two avenues of inquiry that can be characterized in very broad terms as "structural" and "historical" methods. Suggesting that a religion was structured like a language, he proposed a method of comparison that was based on the classification of religions into linguistic families. At the same time, however, Max Müller and other scholars of his era developed a comparative method, which came to be known as the comparative method, that drew inferences about the "primitive" origin of religion from the disparate evidence of "savage" religion that had been collected on the colonized peripheries of empire. Accordingly, that method traced an evolutionary trajectory from the "primitive" to the "civilized" as if it represented a uniform history of the human phenomenon of religion (see Stocking, 1987).

Although these methods of global classification and evolutionary reconstruction have long since been abandoned in Comparative Religious Studies, the dual interest in structure and history has persisted. A concern with the basic structures, forms, or morphology of religion has been evident (see Durkheim, 1965; Eliade, 1958; Paden, 1988). In South Africa, as elsewhere, considerable interest has been shown in the phenomenological method as a way of identifying recurring patterns and processes of religious life (Krüger, 1982; but see Maxwell, 1986). Much of this interest has been informed by the seminal work of Ninian Smart (1973a; 1973b; 1983; 1991; 1992a; 1992b). The phenomenology of religion, which has only the most

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tenuous relationship with the philosophical phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, has often been regarded as method for producing reliable descriptions of religious beliefs, practices and experiences (Ryba, 1991). As an academic method, it requires two corresponding but opposite procedures: While personal bias, prejudice or investment in religion is temporarily suspended, the investigator imaginatively enters into alternative religious worlds. In the process, the phenomenological method produces, "not neutral" or "value free" descriptions, but a relatively free space, a "demilitarized zone," that provides an opening for academic inquiry.

In that free, open space other methods on investigation can be deployed. For example, a dialogical method engages religious diversity in conversation (Cox, 1994); an interpretive method makes strange religious worlds more familiar and, as a result, makes the familiar strange (Smith, 1978; 1982; 1987; 1990); and a critical method analyses the power relations that are implicit in situational and contested productions of the sacred (Chidester, 1994). All of these methods, however, depend upon creating an open political environment for the interplay of religious difference. Therefore, although it can be defended (and attacked) on epistemological or methodological grounds, the phenomenology of religion is best regarded as a political practice for engaging religious diversity (Chidester, 1987).

With regard to historical method, considerable work has been done in South Africa in what might be called the recovery of tradition, especially in recovering the histories of marginalized religious communities. For example, the NERMIC project has coordinated an impressive scholarly effort to recover the history and religious life of African independent churches (Oosthuizen, 1986; 1988). Significant studies have been produced on the South African histories of Muslims (Tayob, 1995), Hindus (Diesel and Maxwell, 1993), Parsees (Naidoo, 1987), and Buddhists (Wratten, 1995). But the best historical work on religion in South Africa has been done by scholars outside of departments of Religious Studies, especially by anthropologists and

historians. Excellent historical research, raising significant issues of theory and method for the study of religion, has illuminated, for example, Bushman shamanism (Lewis-Williams and Dowson, 1989), nineteenth-century Christian missions (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991), and African revitalization movements (Bradford, 1987; Peires; 1989). The most serious deficiency in the history of religions in South Africa, however, has been the lack of substantial research on African traditional religions. This gap is evident in the absence of research on South Africa in major international collections of theoretical and historical essays in the study of African religion (Van Binsbirgen and Schoffelleers, 1985; Blakely, Van Beek and Thomson, 1994).

As a general introduction to the relevant literature in anthropology, history, and comparative religion, the first survey of the history of religions in South Africa – *Religions of South Africa* (Chidester, 1992) – provides a useful overview of the field, but does not directly address issues of theory and method. That survey does suggest, however, that if Comparative Religious Studies is to develop as a discipline in South Africa, it must be in constant conversation and close cooperation with scholars concerned with religion in social anthropology, history, and African Studies.

While this historical research has not been obviously comparative, in the sense of advancing the explicit comparison of two or more religious forms of life, it has illustrated the need for Comparative Religious Studies to develop generic terms of analysis that can be applied in principle to the study of any religious tradition. What links such different evidence – a Bushman trance, a Zulu sacrifice, a Xhosa prophet, a Tswana healer, a Muslim karamat, a Hindu temple, a Christian church – under the same designation, "religion"? How do we justify, on theoretical grounds, their identification as religious" phenomena? As historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith has insisted, the generic term "religion" that links together such a disparate array of discourses, practices, and experiences has been produced by "imaginative acts of comparison and generalization" (1982:xi). Even

in the study of one religious tradition, therefore, comparison is implicit, because the very notion of religion" depends upon the activity of comparison.

In addition to broadly structural and historical methods, Comparative Religious Studies has also engaged techniques of social-scientific investigation and explanation. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud linger in the background, providing reference points for a "hermeneutics of suspicion" that uncovers social interests, psychological needs, and human desires in the phenomenon of religion. Although general explanations of religion have been advanced by South African scholars, explaining religion, for example, as the desire to maximize well-being (Prozesky, 1984), or as the need for belonging (Cumpsty, 1991), little interest has been shown in locating this theoretical work in the history of "naturalistic" explanations of religion (Preus, 1987) or in conversation with recent developments in structuralism (Penner, 1989), cognitive science (Lawson and McCauley, 1990; Boyer, 1993), or the controversy between interpretation and explanation in the academic study of religion (Segal, 1989; 1992). Quantitative research, based on explanatory premises, has also been limited (but see Oosthuizen, *et al.*, 1988).

Nevertheless, at the intersection of the humanities and the social sciences, Comparative Religious Studies can combine interpretive and explanatory procedures into what Michel Foucault called an "interpretive analysis" that engages both the meaning and power of religion (see Chidester, 1986). Towards that end, methods of "world-view analysis" or a "critical phenomenology of religion" might be developed that are attentive not only to the substantial meaning but also to the situational, relational, and contested power relations that are at play and at stake in production of the sacred. This method of inquiry demonstrates, for example, that religious symbols are not merely made meaningful through acts of interpretation; they are also invested with power by acts of appropriation through which they are owned, operated, and stolen back and forth in the cultural processes

and practices of religion (Chidester, 1988a; 1988c; 1992b:4-5). As a result, strategies of religious engagement – the appropriations and inclusions, the denials and exclusions, the inversions and hybridizations, and all the techniques for making and remaking religious worlds – become the primary subject matter for Comparative Religious Studies. In terms of method, therefore, this approach directly confronts religious strategy, or the strategic character of religious action, as a comparative problem. Although this method has gained some attention in the United States (Cherry, 1989:823; Michaelsen, 1991:142; Linenthal, 1991:6, 163; Glass, 1994:265, 271, 279; Chidester and Linenthal, 1995), the "interpretive analysis" of strategic religious practice has not been widely adopted in South Africa (but see Lubbe, 1989; Pato, 1990:24-26, 35).

Usefulness

Considerable advances have been made in Comparative Religious Studies in developing both constructive and critical work on religion in South Africa. First, with respect to constructive work, progress has been made in developing new models and methods for religion education in South African public schools. Departing from the discriminatory nature of past policy, a new approach to religion education, based on methods developed in Comparative Religious Studies, enables pupils to engage religious diversity in ways that foster respect, expand understanding, reduce prejudice, and increase civil toleration in a common society. As the government's 1995 White Paper on Education and Training put it, the education system should facilitate democracy, justice and peace by encouraging mutual respect for people's diverse religious, cultural and language traditions. No other subject in the school curriculum is better suited to accomplish this goal than a religion education based on the resources of Comparative Religious Studies. In cooperation with other initiatives throughout the country, the ICRSA Religion Education Project has been conducting policy research, pilot projects, and teacher-training

workshops for a new religion education (Mitchell, *et. al*, 1993; Sachs, 1993; Chidester, *et al.*, 1994; see Nicolson, 1994).

Second, similar principles promise to broaden the representation of South African religious communities in public broadcasting. However, Comparative Religious Studies will be necessary to ensure that members of different religious communities not only have equitable access, but also have opportunities to meet and learn about each other through the public media.

Third, inter-religious dialogue has been facilitated along the lines of Comparative Religious Studies, especially through the work of the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (Kritzinger, 1991).

Fourth, unexpected applications of Comparative Religious Studies have appeared when scholars in the field have ventured into market research, humanresource consultancy, business administration, or the public service. In numerous cases, skills developed in the study of religion – skills in symbolic analysis, world-view interpretation and intercultural communication – have proven to have wider practical application in South Africa.

With regard to its critical contributions, Comparative Religious Studies first provides important resources for analysing the contested relations between religion and the national question in South Africa. During the apartheid era, critical analysis challenged the "state theology" that legitimated a certain kind of Afrikaner nationalism. Playing a statistical trick with the religious demography of the country, a small minority claimed religious legitimation for a range of public policies based on the presumption of a Christian majority. In a new South Africa, however, religion is being drawn into the national question in new and complex ways. While formerly excluded or marginalized communities assert themselves in public, nationalism itself assumes a new "religious" character. The critical resources of

Comparative Religious Studies can be useful in clarifying the issues of meaning and power at stake in the national question in South Africa.

Second, Comparative Religious Studies is useful for the analysis of the symbolic, cultural, and religious dynamics of economic development. Ever since Max Weber advanced his thesis that linked the rise of capitalism with the Protestant ethic, the connection between religion and economics has been a salient issue in the study of religion. Raising more than merely the question of "values," the investigation of religion and economic activity clarifies the different orientations towards time and labour, human action and interaction, symbolic negotiation, ritualized exchange, and materiality that are cultivated within different religious traditions (Long, 1990:35-40; Strenksi, 1991; 1993).

Third, Comparative Religious Studies develops critical tools for analyzing, not only the formation of consensus and community but also conflict and violence. If we are to diminish that violence, we will find the resources of Comparative Religious Studies useful in the critical analysis of the sacred violence that has appeared in ritualized killings, witch accusations, institutionalized dehumanization, and armed religions of contending nationalisms (see Chidester, 1992b).

Finally, the usefulness of Comparative Religious Studies is perhaps best located in the distinctive kind of internal political practice that it advances. While religious actors make competing, mutually exclusive claims to ownership of sacred symbols, Comparative Religious Studies renounces all claims to ownership. Through critical analysis of the patterns and processes of the human phenomenon of religion, Comparative Religious Studies demonstrates that no claim to privileged ownership of the sacred is final, absolute, or uncontested. Sacred symbols remain available for new interpretations and appropriations. As a political practice, therefore, Comparative Religious Studies liberates religious symbols, myths, rituals, and experiences from contending claims to exclusive ownership. In South

African universities, the free, open space for the exploration of religious diversity that is created by this political practice is the greatest practical contribution of Comparative Religious Studies to a democratic South Africa.

New directions

In the South African context, everything about Comparative Religious Studies leads in new directions. First, basic research materials for Comparative Religious Studies in South Africa must still be made available. Towards that end, introductory texts such as *Religions of South Africa* (Chidester, 1992a) and *Living Faiths in South Africa* (De Gruchy and Prozesky, 1995) have marked a beginning. But a wealth of resources remains largely unavailable to students, researchers and the interested public. ICRSA has attempted to meet the need for greater access to research materials by creating a computerized database, with annotated entries, on the religions of South Africa. This material appears in the three annotated bibliographies — *African Traditional Religion in South Africa, Christianity in South Africa, and Islam, Hinduism and Judaism in South Africa* (Chidester, *et al.*, 1997a, b, c). Nevertheless, much work remains to be done, even on a purely descriptive level, in documenting the rich religious history and diversity of South Africa.

Second, theoretical and methodological work is needed on the logic of comparison. In part, this work is required to overcome popular misconceptions of Comparative Religious Studies — that it violates the unique character of specific religious traditions; that it is too judgemental because it supposedly evaluates all religions and picks the best; or that it is not judgemental enough because it allegedly requires an impossible neutrality, a mushy universalism, or a soft relativism that presumes the equality of all religions. Comparative Religious Studies presupposes none of these positions. But what does it understand by comparison? As a basic feature of human thought, comparison is central to all the disciplines of the human and social

sciences. Therefore, any advances in clarifying the logic of comparison within the study of religion can be of potential use to other academic disciplines (Poole, 1986; Taylor, 1990).

Third, by engaging the logic of comparison, Comparative Religious Studies also needs to undertake a sustained historical critique of comparison. In the process, Comparative Religious Studies might very well emerge as a discipline that does not compare religions. Instead, it compares comparisons. Every religious community entertains comparisons — between us and them, between inside and outside, between the one and the many, and so on — that are essential to the production of religious discourses and practices. As a science of comparison, Comparative Religious Studies must be prepared to analyse those comparisons. But it must also endeavour to retrace the history of comparison through which it was formed as an academic discipline. For example, South Africa was much more important to the emergence of an international Comparative Religious Studies than has previously been realized. On South African frontiers during the nineteenth century, comparisons were hammered out on battlefields by travellers, missionaries, settlers, colonial magistrates and indigenous Africans to make sense out of a new and changing world of religious diversity. In Europe, extensive use was made of South African evidence in formulating an imperial comparative religion. These comparisons of religious ways of life, whether situated on frontier battlefields or at the centre of empire, can become important subject matter for Comparative Religious Studies in South Africa (Chidester, 1996).

Finally, Comparative Religious Studies must continue to develop a civil discourse of comparison. Rather than adopting a theological position on religious diversity, Comparative Religious Studies in the university creates a civil space for free inquiry into the patterns and processes of religious life. As a result, it has the potential to make an important contribution to the emergence of a civil society. By exploring the invented traditions, imagined communities and political mythologies in South Africa, Comparative Religious Studies can

struggle to understand the meaningful realities and powerful effects that are generated within all the different religious worlds that coexist in a common society (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1985; Anderson, 1991; Thompson, 1985). In developing a civil discourse about those alternatives, Comparative Religious Studies pursues a post-colonial scholarship, following Edward Said, that "means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is number one" (1993:408). Accordingly, it presents the possibility of an academic practice in which the play of difference could range free of the structures of inequality" (Spurr, 1993:201). As a research method, a national resource and a civil discourse about religion, Comparative Religious Studies promises to make a significant contribution to a changing South Africa.

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9

Normative theory in international relations

Mervyn Frost

Introduction

I shall outline a field of research within the discipline of International Relations which is normally referred to as normative theory, but is often also called Ethics in International Relations.[1] Researchers who are busy in this field tackle questions which are of general importance in both the theory and practice of world politics. Stated at the highest level of abstraction the interest is in the question: How ought individuals, nations and states, to behave in their relations with one another? What interests them are questions such as: When is one state justified in going to war with another? When may a nation legitimately undertake a war of national liberation? When may states interfere in the domestic affairs of other states?

Questions about how we ought to behave in world politics are, of course, pertinent to all people, nations and states. It follows that they are of great importance to South Africa and South Africans too. In what follows I shall use examples throughout which indicate the direct relevance to South Africa of what has been done in this area both by me and others. In spite of its direct relevance, though, most of the work in this area of specialization has not been done here. This subject is greatly underdeveloped in South Africa and there is an urgent need

to remedy this by introducing more courses on the subject into Political Science and International Relations curricula and by directing, financing and encouraging research students into this domain.

Background

Social scientists have in general been preoccupied with explaining and understanding social phenomena. In all the subsections of the social sciences such as Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology and in all the subdivisions of Political Science among which we find International Relations, this preoccupation has held sway. In general scholars in these fields did not (and do not) consider it appropriate for them to devote their attention to normative issues, i.e. issues to do with questions about what it is right to do in particular circumstances. They thought that, in their capacity as scientists, it would be inappropriate for them to address such questions as: What is justice? What is democracy? What moral obligations do people have to one another? What natural rights do people have? When is war justified? and so on. In general they avoided all the permutations of the question What ought to be done under the given circumstances?

The eschewal of normative questions has been especially true within the discipline of International Relations.[2] This discipline is a young one which developed a sizeable number of practitioners, university departments, subject specific journals and professional associations only after the end of the Second World War (with the majority of these developments taking place in the USA).[3] For the forty years of this history, specialists in International Relations avoided serious involvement with questions about right conduct in world politics. Their job, as they conceived it, simply did not include dealing with question: What ought to be done?

This reluctance to become involved in normative theory is puzzling, for it is patent to even the most casual observer of world politics that there are a host of pressing ethical questions which face us

all, whether we be ordinary citizens or members of governments in positions of power. Let me mention three that are of direct concern to South Africans at the moment.

First, in Rwanda in recent times there have been several examples of one tribe committing genocide against another. In the most recent cases the minority governing tribe, the Tutsi, have exterminated upwards of 5000 of the majority Hutu group who were leaving refugee camps to return to the territories in which they had traditionally lived.[4] In thinking about the events there and what we ought to do in response to them, we cannot but tackle several difficult ethical questions, such as: Is there any justification for one tribe's slaughtering another in such circumstances? This, of course, raises the prior question: Is it ever justifiable for members of one group to set about killing the members of another? This question would quickly lead us to think about the circumstances under which war might be justified. Here we would, no doubt, turn to the vast corpus of literature known as "Just War Theory".[5] In the light of what we decided about the rightness and wrongness of the Tutsi killing of the Hutu, we would still have to decide what we as ordinary South Africans (or as ministers in the South African government) ought to do about the massacres in Rwanda. Would it be appropriate for us to lobby our government with a view to sending South African troops to that country in order to limit the violence there? Or would doing that be a case of wrongful interference in the domestic affairs of another state? If we think the latter, then we would have to consider whether it is ever right for one country to intervene in the internal affairs of another.

Second, consider this example: There is at present a huge influx of illegal immigrants into South Africa from neighbouring states.[6] These swell the large pool of immigrants who are already illegally here - this pool may comprise three million people, or more. The new arrivals are for the most part not political refugees seeking asylum from persecution in their home territories; rather they are economic refugees who perceive (quite rightly) that their economic prospects in

South Africa are likely to be considerably better here than in their country of origin. These people present us (as ordinary citizens or as members of the government) with what are essentially ethical problems. Their presence here may well be illegal in terms of the law as it now stands, but what we have to consider is whether the law as it is is justified. Ought we to keep the law as it is, make it stricter, or make it more lenient? In considering these questions we might consider the following: Do we not have a moral duty towards our neighbours who are starving and in need of employment? Is this duty not all the more pressing given the help which the frontline states gave to exiled South Africans during the struggle against apartheid? If we do not have a duty to help them, what duties do we owe them? Furthermore, since our interim constitution specifies a list of fundamental human rights, do these rights not apply to all people in South Africa, including illegal immigrants? If not, what rights do such people have? If we envisage passing laws which deny people residence in South Africa, and if this denial will result in such people starving in their land of origin, do we as South Africans have a duty to provide development aid to such countries? (Or is the problem of starving people beyond our borders not one of great concern to us?)

Third, do the people and government of South Africa today have a duty to make reparations to neighbouring states for the depredations made on those states by the previous government during the days of "total strategy"? (Of course it was said at the time that this policy was devised to counter the "total onslaught" of 'the Communists".) What kinds of arguments can be presented one way or another on this issue?

The central puzzle

My own research in the field of Ethics and International Relations was prompted in the first place by the following consideration: If, as I have indicated above, there are many pressing ethical questions in international affairs, why have scholars in the discipline so assiduously avoided dealing with them? Why is it that they spend their time,

energy and resources on explaining and understanding international affairs, and devote so very little of it' on seeking answers to difficult normative questions such as the ones mentioned above?[7] If all of us engaged in the practice of world politics in one way or another (that is, all men and women everywhere) face very difficult questions about a just world order, just distributions of the world's product, the protection of rights, the establishment of democracy, decisions about just wars and how to fight them, and questions about the right thing to do about the global environment, why is it that our scholars, professors and students devote so little time to considering these questions. On the face of the matter these normative questions seemed to me to be as important as any problems requiring empirical explanation.

In seeking an answer to the puzzle mentioned above, it soon became apparent to me that the answer to this question had to do, in the first place, with the way in which social scientists in general and International Relations scholars in particular understood (and understand) the nature of the science which they saw themselves as practising. Science in their view was an activity quite distinct in kind from normative theory. This belief identified them as *positivist* in their methodology. The first part of my project, then, was concerned with an investigation of this self-understanding of the scientists in the field.

Secondly, I realized that their eschewal of normative theory had to do with their preconceptions about the nature of normative judgements and normative theory in general. They thought that ethical judgements were subjective, arbitrary, a matter of taste and so on . Following from this understanding, they believed that where people differed on normative issues there was no rational way in which such disputes could be settled. Where differences arose, all one could do was note the difference, or settle the issue by recourse to force. It was these presumed features of ethical discourse which showed it up in such a bad light when compared to science. For they believed that in social science, where disputes between competing

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theories arose, these could be settled by reference to the facts which were there for all to see in an objective and value-free way. Scientific theories, they held, could be conclusively settled, whereas ethical disputes could not. With regard to these issues, then, I set out to establish whether or not these widespread beliefs about the nature of science and about the nature of normative judgements were, indeed, true.

My inquiry was aimed at examining the assumptions which prevented theorists taking normative theory seriously. If the assumptions were shown to be faulty, then the way might be opened for ethical theory to play a more prominent role in the canon of International Relations.

Method

The kind of inquiry which I engaged in with regard to these matters was essentially philosophical, that is, it involved conceptual analysis rather than empirical investigation. It involved examining the assumptions of the dominant approaches to International Relations.

First, I critically analysed the positivist assumption endorsed by most scholars in the field. At the base of the many different schools of thought in the discipline I found, as I mentioned above, a common assumption that all theory could in the final instance be tested against the facts. In terms of this assumption the realm of facts provided an impartial, hard, and uncontentious bedrock against which rival theories could be tested and a definitive result obtained. Borrowing from developments in philosophy, and the philosophy of the social sciences, I showed that the notion of a hard, empirical fact which could be investigated through straightforward observation was not quite what it was assumed to be. Following suggestions found in the writings of philosophers like Wittgenstein (in his later work), Quine and Davidson and in the writings of philosophers of science like Kuhn and Feyerabend, I indicated how what investigators take to be the facts is

determined largely by the theoretical framework within which they operate.[8] Far from its being the case that the facts stand outside of and independent of the theories which the investigator is working with, and far from its being the case that they form an independent realm against which theory can be tested, *what is to count as a fact is already theory laden.* The theories investigators hold determine what they will consider to be a relevant fact.

Beyond showing that what we take to be the facts is informed by the theory (or theories) which we hold, I sought to show that the 'facts" with which social scientists are primarily concerned *are actions* and that in order to understand such actions an observer cannot but become involved in normative theory. For it is easily shown that all actions, such as declaring war, making peace and so on, can be understood only in the context of a larger practice (i.e. within the practice of inter-state relations) and that these practices themselves embody different value systems. For example, that practice which we call the system of sovereign states embodies and upholds certain values, such as the values of sovereignty and citizenship. Indeed, all players in the practice are taken to uphold these values. (Just as the players in that practice which we call chess may be taken to be committed to maintaining the values advanced by that game, for example, they may be taken to value a certain kind of intellectual pleasure and a certain form of competitive activity.)

The most difficult part of what I sought to argue in that section of my research was that social scientists, in seeking to specify what action had taken place in a given context, had to engage in a dialogue with the actor (or actors) under scrutiny, and that in this dialogue they could not but become involved in discussions of a normative nature with the actor(s) in question. For example, suppose that a social scientist sought to determine whether a given instance of the South African government's military involvement in Mozambique during the 1980s was either an example of an attack on a sovereign state or an example of forward defence against an aggressor. Determining this

would clearly require that the investigator establish what the actor (in this case the South African government) thought it was doing. But what the South African government said it did in this case would not be the correct description of the action simply because it said this was so. In the discussion about whether it was an act of defence or an act of attack, the interlocutors (in this case the government and the theorist) would have to get involved in profound discussions about the purpose of states, the duties of governments, the legitimacy of threats and so on. Neither of them would be able to make any headway in such a discussion without a rather detailed knowledge of normative political philosophy.

In this first section of my work I opened the way for taking normative theory seriously by showing that the positivist assumption which had acted as a block to this was itself flawed. The fact/value distinction on which it rested was not quite as watertight as its adherents had thought. Especially with regard to *actions* I showed that theorists had to take normative theory seriously in order to understand and interpret actions.

Secondly, I then focused my attention on an analysis of the supposed "softness" of normative judgements (often referred to as value judgements) when compared to the assumed hardness' of factual (or empirical) judgements. In this section I looked at a whole range of different kinds of arguments which sought in one way or another to show normative judgement to be weak in specified ways.

One assumption often encountered is that about matters of value there is no truth to the matter. In other words value judgements are not items of knowledge properly so called. What I showed in this regard is that the consequences of taking this position are very dire indeed. They have dire consequences, for example, for the very notion of you or me being a person. For when you claim to be a person, one of the things which you are claiming is that I and others ought to value you in certain ways. Your claim, in other words, entails a further

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claim to the truth of the value judgement: "People ought to value me." If we were to take seriously the claim that value judgements are neither true nor false but merely arbitrary, then it would become difficult to conceive of how we might go about claiming that we are persons (as opposed to things, for example). You would have to say: "I am a person and this requires of you that you value me in certain ways, but because value judgements are arbitrary you may value me in any way you please." This is very odd for it would allow others to value you not at all, i.e. to accept that it would be legitimate to torture, maim or kill you. There is no possible argument which you could raise against this. This line of argument indicates, I contend, that although value judgements might lack a certain kind of cognitive status, we certainly accept them as true in everyday life. We take them seriously and we cannot but do so.

Similar arguments to the one discussed above can be put together with regard to states and the claims people make for and on behalf of states. When we say, for example, that South Africa is a sovereign state we are, among other things, indicating that we South Africans, as members of this state, ought to be respected in certain specified ways by the international community of states. Our claim is not that they may respect us if they feel like so doing, but that they have a real obligation to do so. Our claim to statehood entails our believing that certain value judgements are true.

I also looked at a range of other arguments which have been taken as discrediting normative theory. For example, I looked at realist arguments which purported to show that ethical codes and the like are derivative from the deeper power structures which are to be found in world politics. Here I sought to show that all the practices are founded in the first place on certain ethical commitments. The so-called deep structures of power cannot be investigated independently of an understanding of actions set in practices, and this prior understanding requires of investigators that they display considerable knowledge of normative theories.

Other factors which have reawakened interest in international ethics

During the Cold War it appeared as if normative concerns were at all points subservient to power politics. Each superpower portrayed the other as completely amoral. This was a period during which those with a realist approach to the study of world politics seemed to have a strong case. They stressed that world politics was concerned primarily with a struggle for power between the superpowers and that all else flowed from that. Even then the preoccupation with power to the exclusion of normative concerns was untenable because, for example, even the superpowers acknowledged one another's right to statehood, and they agreed on certain limits to how wars might be waged, and the like. Since the end of the Cold War normative concerns have come dramatically to the fore again. It is now widely recognized that we need to think carefully about what exactly is contained in the right of self-determination of peoples, what rights of intervention outsiders have when states are guilty of gross violations of human rights or gross negligence with regard to the preservation of the international environment, and what international organizations may do in order to promote development and democracy within weak states.[9]

The emergence in the modern world of a single market economy based on capitalist principles has produced a world in which there appears to be substantial agreement on many organizational rules, but there are very difficult normative issues which keep rearing their heads in the realm of the global economy. For example, many countries of the South claim that their access to markets is quite often barred by developed states. Their claim is that the existing arrangements are *unfair*. Their arguments have found some international favour and have resulted in, among other things, the establishment of the Lome Convention which seeks to allow certain African, Caribbean and Pacific states privileged access to the markets of the European Community. There are ongoing disputes about the *justice* of the present ways of distributing the global product.

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Finally, the fact that most states of the modern world are members of the United Nations Organization indicates a degree of consensus on normative issues (namely those embodied in the Charter). The United Nations also provides a forum within which disputes about the precise relationship between the different values embodied in the Charter may be discussed. There is, for example, a tension between human rights and the rights of nations. These often appear to pull in different directions. There are, likewise, tensions between the value accorded to state sovereignty and the value accorded to individual human rights.

Substantive ethical theories in international relations

We live, then, in a world in which difficult ethical issues have clearly come to light. For South Africa the key ones are:

■ What ought to be done about economic refugees?

■ What ought to be done about development aid to poorer neighbours?

■ What economic policies would result in a just distribution of resources in the region?

■ Does South Africa have a duty to intervene in regional conflicts (Angola, Rwanda)?

■ What ought South Africa to do with regard to its nuclear capability?

■ What ought it to do with regard to its arms manufacturing capability?

■ What ought it to do with regard to the preservation of the regional environment?

How might one set about tackling these questions in order to seek answers which might provide us with guidance in practice? At first glance the task seems to be an impossible one. The main reason is that there does not appear to be a single moral theory which all people everywhere adhere to. Even the most casual observer of world politics knows that there are fundamental differences between, for example,

liberals and Muslim fundamentalists, and between Christians and Marxists. In South Africa there are differences between, for example, the supporters of the Afrikaner Volkswag and the South African Communist Party. The mere existence of this moral diversity might not pose such a problem if there were some agreed-upon way of settling ethical disputes between the diverse practices. If there were only some way in which we could subject the theories to some test which would prove which ones were valid and which not. But we do not have such a test and the problem appears to be intractable.

In seeking a way out of this it occurred to me that I might be able to edge towards a solution of this problem by starting with points of agreement which seemed to be common to all people everywhere. My starting point was that we all live within a single global system of sovereign states. Therefore *so no matter what ethical code we adhere to we have at least this in common, that we are all members of states in a worldwide community of states.* This is not something minimal which we have in common; what we have in common is our participation in a very complex practice which is becoming more complex daily. In order to participate in this practice we all accept and attach value to at least the following: states, sovereignty, international law, international organization, the maintenance of the balance of power, the prevention of war, collective security arrangements such as the United Nations Organization, human rights (as spelled out in the Universal Declaration), self-determination, democracy, development, modernization, and many other notions. It may well be that we do not agree on what exactly each of these concepts means. It is probable that we do not all agree on how they ought to be combined with one another. Nevertheless, there is a certain core meaning to each of these ideas and it seemed to me that these meanings which we hold in common provide us with sufficient purchase to begin a productive argument with one another about normative issues.

Beyond this it seemed to me reasonable to assume that people who are jointly working within a given practice would assume that in some

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broad sense the practice in question would form some kind of coherent whole. Support for this is to be found by considering the converse. There would be something odd about people participating in practices (religious, sporting, cultural, educational or political) which were fundamentally incoherent.

Finally, it seemed reasonable to assume that although many participants in a given practice might not have thought explicitly about normative issues, they would tacitly assume that there was some normative point or purpose to the practice in question. To understand this, consider once again the converse - it would be most odd to participate in a perfectly pointless practice.

The points of agreement which exist worldwide, together with the two assumptions mentioned above, suggest a way in which we might set about solving the difficult ethical questions which confront us today both in South Africa and more generally. In developing this method I closely followed a brilliant model developed by Ronald Dworkin in the context of jurisprudence.[10]

This model by Dworkin is highly sophisticated, but its outline can be simply presented: It requires of us that we list the widely accepted norms which we find within the practice of international politics, and that we seek to construct a background theory which will justify this list of settled norms. After this we can use the background theory thus constructed to provide answers to the difficult normative questions currently besetting us. The key phase in all this is the construction of the background theory.

When I sought to construct a background theory for the list of settled norms in international relations I found, for reasons which I cannot go into now, that utilitarian theories, order-based theories and rights-based theories failed to justify the list of settled norms which I mentioned earlier. The most satisfactory background theory was one which I called *constitutive theory*. This theory provides, I maintain, an

extremely useful way of approaching the normative issues which are current in world politics today.

Constitutive theory

What constitutive theory brings to light is the way in which we are constituted as moral beings within a hierarchy of social institutions. The very notion of our being moral beings presupposes that we are such within a social practice constructed in specified ways.

In the first phase of moral development all individuals are constituted as moral beings within the context of a family in which they is set up as beings to be valued and worthy of love. This standing is created by the recognition conferred on the person by the other members of the family. But within the family one is not fully autonomous, for within it a person is merely a member and is subject to the authority of elders.

This problem is overcome in the second phase when individuals in a sense graduate from the family to become members of civil society in which they are recognized as rights holder who are in a position to make contracts and to buy and sell property. In doing this they gain in moral stature. But although this kind of recognition is an advance on that accorded to a person in a family it is still deficient in certain respects because the laws and rules of civil society are seen as somehow natural and are imposed upon the participants. It is only in the next and third phase which takes place in the higher institution of the state that people are recognized as fully autonomous insofar as they are citizens who together with their fellow citizens create a legal framework for themselves. In a democratic state people live under laws which they have created for themselves. Finally, the standing which people enjoy within a state is achieved only insofar as other states recognize the sovereign independence of the state within which they live. Thus the global system of sovereign states is seen as an integral

component of the total hierarchy of institutions within which they are created as fully fledged autonomous moral beings.

The strength of constitutive theory as opposed to the other moral theories which are sometimes considered apposite is that it justifies a whole range of institutions (namely the family, civil society, the state and the system of sovereign states). Rival theories, such as rights-based theories, for example, struggle to resolve the tension between human rights and state rights. Order-based theories in turn fail to give a satisfactory account of our deep-seated commitment to human rights. Utilitarian theory fails on this score as well.

Applications of constitutive theory

Let me now indicate in brief the direction in which constitutive theory leads when it is used to think about a typical ethical question facing South Africa in its international relations.

For constitutive theory the overriding ethical goal in international politics is the establishment of a full set of institutions within which people can constitute themselves as moral beings. It stresses that what needs to be brought about is an elaborate set of mutual recognitions between people. It highlights, furthermore, that the kinds of recognitions required in the family, civil society and the state are not such that people can be forced to adhere to them (at the point of a gun, for example).

Let us, then, apply this method to the question of economic refugees. In order to simplify matters, consider a single economic person, let us call her Refugee. In order to achieve full moral standing Refugee requires recognition from the members of her family, the members of civil society, and fellow citizens in a state. We as outsiders to her family cannot create a family context for her, but we may in a broad way be able to help create an environment in which her family (and others) can flourish. The help we provide may be in the economic, political or spiritual realms. Let us suppose that she is a Ugandan and

her family is still there: it is clear that what we can do for them may be limited considering the distance we are from the family. But if her family were here in South Africa with her, then it is clear that there is a lot we can do and there is much which we ought not to do. For a start it would be wrong to separate the members of the family, compelling them to live in different places. It would be wrong to allow her to stay in South Africa, compelling the rest of her family to return to Uganda. There are other practical steps we might consider with regard to Refugee's family life to do with health, housing and welfare.

Over and above the recognitions accorded her within her family, she requires the recognitions which can be acquired only in civil society. She requires, in short, that she be recognized as a rights holder, as one who has contractual capacity so that she can buy and sell and form associations of one kind or another. Civil society, which is the realm of natural rights, knows no borders, does not have a closed membership and is a global society. Thus we cannot say that she does not belong to "our" civil society but belongs to some other one. For civil society is the realm of the rights of human beings, and these rights are not such that insiders have them and outsiders do not. They are the rights of all people everywhere. So where she finds people willing to contract with her we must respect that contract, and where we find people willing to form associations with her we are obligated to respect that too. On this view the law of our land should allow foreigners access to South Africa so that they may participate in all the many different kinds of activity one finds in this corner of the global civil society. Equally it should allow rights holders presently in South Africa to go abroad to pursue these activities elsewhere. The activities in question include buying and selling, establishing associations of one kind or another, participating in sporting activities or cultural ones, and so on.

The difficult case with regard to Refugee arises, of course, when she states a desire to live here permanently. She may indicate that she wishes to live here, hold down a job here and become a South African

citizen. The matter is difficult because, as things now stand, she is an illegal immigrant who has come here seeking economic advantage. The question facing us is whether we South Africans, by means of legislation passed by our government, should grant her migrant labourer status, some form of partial citizenship, or full citizenship, or whether we should expel her from our state and grant her none of these? What, from a moral perspective, ought we to do?

How does constitutive theory help us in our thinking about this matter? It indicates the following:

- First, it insists that nobody ought to be denied citizenship anywhere. Stated positively this means everybody should be a full member of some state. Whatever we decide must be guided by this consideration.
- Second, the theory holds that citizenship consists of *mutual recognition*. Citizenship only comes into being only where people voluntarily confer this status on one another. It cannot be forced upon one party by another. It follows that in order for Refugee to become a citizen, both she and the citizens of South Africa must want to confer that status upon one another. And alternative way of putting this is to say that South Africans are not obligated to accept as a citizen *anyone* who wants to become one. Thus South Africans might decide that they do not want to admit Refugee. The reason might be that there are already too many citizens in the country, or they might have views about the kinds of people and skills the country needs
- Third, constitutive theory insists that if we are not prepared to allow Refugee citizenship here then we should be greatly concerned that she achieve it elsewhere. We should do what we can to nurture the state in which Refugee can establish her standing as refugee. The kind of aid called for from us might be economic, technical, political or in extreme cases even military.
- Fourth if we do accept Refugee into South Africa as a permanent participant in the economy and if she never goes home to her country of origin (thus making her citizenship there purely

nominal), then denying her citizenship would be wrong, just as it was wrong for white South Africans to deny citizenship to black South Africans prior to 1994.[11]

Conclusion

What makes constitutive theory of singular importance is the way in which it makes clear that the most important moral questions are about the design, creation and maintenance of social institutions. It makes clear that the key moral issues are not about a narrow area of choice which we sometimes come to face in our individual lives. Instead, they are to be found in those domains where we come to consider at a general level the kinds of institutions within which we are to live.

Applying this to South African constitutive theory makes it clear that in thinking about our relationship with the world beyond our border we South Africans are engaged in an enterprise with a strongly moral dimension which can be encapsulated in the imperative: *Build and support families, secure the freedoms of a global civil society, and do what is necessary to establish a system of states within which all people can flourish as citizens.* Working out the details of what this imperative requires for the other moral questions pressing in on South Africa is a task which needs to be done.

Endnotes

1   A good introduction to the field is Chris Brown *International relations theory:New normative approaches* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). A decade of literature in the field includes: L. Brimayer, *Justifying international acts* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989); Chris Brown (ed), *Political restructuring in Europe: Ethical perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Allen Buchanan, *Secession:The morality of political divorce* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); James Child, *Nuclear war: The moral dimension* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1986); Anthony Ellis, *Ethics and international Relations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); John Finnis, J. Boyle, and G. Grisez, *Nuclear deterrence, morality and realism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Paul Keal (ed.) *Ethics and foreign policy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1992); F. Kratochwil, *Rules, norms and decisions* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); A. Linklater, *Men and citizens in the*

theory of international relations, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1990); Terry Nardin and David Mapel *Traditions of international ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1992): Joseph Nye (ed.), *Nuclear ethics* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Nicholas Onuf, *World of our making: Rules and rule in social theory and international relations* (Columbia S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); T. Pogge *Realizing Rawls* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); John, Vincent *Human rights and international relations* (Cambridge University Press, 1986). Key Journals are: *Millenium: Journal of International Studies; Review of International Studies; Ethics; International Organization; Ethics and International Affairs; Philosophy and Public Affairs; Journal of Applied Philosophy; and Social Philosophy and Policy.*

2 See my *Towards a normative theory of international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) Chapter One.

3 For an account of the development of the discipline see Steve Smith, "The development of international relations as a social science" in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 16, Number 1, (Summer, 1987) pp. 189-206.

4 The details of all this are still highly contested, but this in no way detracts from the point I am making about the salience of normative considerations to thinking about such cases.

5 In this connection see, for example, Barrie Paskins and Michael Dockrill, *The Ethics of war* (London: Duckworth, 1979).

6 For a discussion of this matter see Maxine Reitzes, "Insiders and outsiders:The reconstruction of citizenship in South Africa" in the *Social Policy Series* of the Centre for Policy Studies, Vol. 8, Number I (February 1995).

7 My published work in this field includes: A review article of *The ethics of war*, by Barrie Paskins and Michael Dockrill, in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (May, 1984); "Normative theory and international relations: Overcoming the positivist bias' in *South Aftican Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (1985); *Towards a normative theory of international relations.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); "The philosophical approach to international relations: The neglected dimension" in *International relations.-A debate on methodology* Mervyn Frost, Peter Vale and David Weiner (eds). (Pretoria HSRC, 1989); "What ought to be done about the condition of states" in Cornelia Navari (ed.) *The condition of states (ed)* Cornelia Navari, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991); "The great issues of politics: Justice, an introduction" in Albert Venter and Alexander Johnston, (eds) *Politics: An introduction for Southern Aftican students* (eds) Albert Venter and Alexander Johnston, (Cape Town; Oxford University Press, 1991); "The role of normative theory in IR" in *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1994), pp. 109-119; "Constituting a new world order" in *Paradigm*, Vol. 8, Number I (Summer 1994) pp. 13-23; "Foreign policy in the new South Africa: The ethical issues" in Walter Carlsnaes (ed.) *The international relations of a democratic South Africa* (ed.) Walter Carlsnaes, (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, forthcoming 1995).

8 See the discussion of these issues in Maffin Hollis and Steven Smith, *Explaining and understanding international relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

9 Such states are often referred to as "Quasi-States" by Robert Jackson. See his *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, international relations and the Third World* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

10 See his *Taking rights seriously* (London: Duckworth, 1981).

11 For a particularly impressive discussion of this issue see Michael Walzer, *Spheres of justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), Chapter Two.

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Deconstructing and reconstructing South African psychology

Peter du Preez

Introduction

The aims of this paper are (1) to investigate the extent to which South African psychology is a product of apartheid; (2) to investigate the extent to which South African psychology has been rhetorically constructed as a unitary subject; (3) to attempt a case study of one tradition of psychological research in South Africa, namely the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition of cross-cultural research, since cross-cultural research exposes the ways in which psychologists think of the "others" in their society; and (4) to suggest, in the light of the case study, the reconstruction of South African psychology as cultural psychology.

South African psychology as a product of apartheid

When we ask whether South African psychology was much influenced by apartheid we can answer both "yes" and "no".

Hypothesis 1 ("yes")

South African psychology took the form of a unique apartheid psychology.

In support of this hypothesis we refer to the following:

- Distorted practice: the provision of services followed the rules of apartheid.
- Distorted education: the education of psychologists was divided by the rules of apartheid.
- Distorted organization: professional organizations split along apartheid lines (PIRSA, PASA, SAPA, OASSA).
- Isolation: exclusion from international organizations
  - contacts reduced
  - emigration of many talented psychologists
  - reduced recruitment

These are all serious distortions. Here, I shall not elaborate on the obvious.

Hypothesis 2 ("no")

South African psychology reflects the main currents of Western psychology on a reduced scale. Among the features it reflects are internal debate and diversity.

In support of this hypothesis we refer to the following:
- Textbooks used are Western, mainly American.
- International examination of theses for advanced degrees is common.
- Graduates are accepted and successful overseas.
- Books, chapters and articles are published internationally.
- International conferences are participated in.

The range of articles in local journals, such as the *South African Journal of Psychology* (SAJP) and *Psychology in Society* (PINS), is responsive to most of the currents in international psychology, extending from critical psychology and discourse analysis to health and organizational psychology and citing all the major figures. Criticism of the mainstream is one of the currents of psychological thought. Just as art is not only academic but also *avant-garde*, so psychology is not only mainstream but also "progressive". Distancing oneself from the establishment is one of the standard tactics of young psychologists. And what could be more desirable than to distance oneself from "apartheid psychology" by embracing a critical

psychology which is claimed to be an inherently emancipatory psychology under the patronage of Marcuse, Habermas, Jacoby, Lasch, and Laing – and working at the "urgent project" of an indigenous psychology (Ivey, 1986:25). Nor has critical discussion been confined to *Psychology in Society*; there have been extensive debates on the issue of "relevance" in the establishment *South African Journal of Psychology* (Biesheuvel, 1987; 1991; Dawes, 1985; Freeman, 1991; Holdstock, 1981; Liddell and Kvalsvig, 1990; Nell, 1990; Retief,1989).

Local publications echo the racist currents, both deliberate and inadvertent, in European, American and South African society. Since apartheid was so blatant, the most pervasive influence on South African psychology is more likely to be the set of assumptions which shaped the whole of Western psychology in the colonial and immediate post-colonial period.

Perhaps the greatest loss to South African psychology has been what did not happen because so many creative scientists left and did their work in other places.

Deconstructing the unitary subject

Movements compete by using strategies such as: caricaturing the opposition; protecting a tradition by ignoring rivals; undermining the methodology of the opposition; solving the opposition's problems for them; raising the bid by increasing the difficulty of the problems that have to be solved; making formal demands such as prediction, programmability, mathematization of theory, or falsifiability; and changing the values of inquiry and the questions that have to be answered by referring to social criteria such as legitimacy or utility (Du Preez, 1991).

One of the strategies which movements may use is to construct a dichotomy which suggests the opposition of two unified entities. One such dichotomy is "South African psychology" versus "progressive psychology".

Manganyi (1993:321), for instance, argues that "there is a facile misconception – even among psychologists – of the existence of a unitary science called psychology" He continues, however, by constructing an alternative, equally unitary structure, based on the notion that South African psychology is unified by the acceptance of "race science".

South African psychological teaching and practice, he says, are virtually identical to teaching and practice in the USA, Australia and the UK, differing only by the addition of "race science" to the mixture. By embracing the worst of Anglo-Saxon psychology and social science traditions, the founding fathers of South African psychology took refuge in international "race science" (Manganyi, 1993:320). Two examples are mentioned by Manganyi: Fick and Robbertse. They were important; they were also only one strand of South African psychology. It is rather like referring to Jensen as the key figure in American psychology, or to the recently published *The Bell Curve* by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994) as *the* voice of American psychology and ignoring all the other voices. It ignores the fact that Biesheuvel (1943) wrote an important refutation of Fick which was published by the South African Institute of Race Relations during the Second World War, at a time when racist theories were threatening many parts of the world.

If we take the view that there is no single theoretically coherent discourse which we can identify as "South African psychology" (or any other "national" psychology), and that there may not even be a single identifiable strand (such as "race science" running through all of it), we come to conclusions which are both disappointing and hopeful. Diversity is not nearly as dramatic as a dichotomy in which we might occupy one or other fortified position. What is hopeful about it is that diversity is the foundation of innovation. We might have to admit that South African psychologists were not all race theorists and that there were a number of approaches.

Science is a series of marriages of convenience organized around hypotheses which are soon proved to be no basis for anything more than a temporary liaison. It is very promiscuous. Permanent relationships are based on error and illusion. "It is the privilege of error to give its name to a sect", said Voltaire (1971, orig. 1764).

The debates in *Psychology in Society* and the *South African Journal of Psychology (SAJP)*, reveal all the strategies listed above. There are methodological attacks on established psychology, characterized as positivist and empiricist, as opposed to critical psychology, which is "an inherently emancipatory discourse" (Ivey, 1986). It is said that psychology should be relevant, that the humanistic values underlying established psychology are uncritical of social formations and serve the existing order, and that selection tests such as those developed at the NIPR serve capitalism. The choice put to South African psychologists is: "Are you on the side of an elite liberal academic tradition or are you prepared through your work to identify with pragmatic Africanist initiatives", defined as "work towards the application of psychological knowledge in the interests of national development" (Dawes, 1986:44-5).

The need for an Afrocentric psychology to displace Eurocentric psychology is repeatedly stressed. Though the substantive research published in *PINS* is indistinguishable from research published in the establishment *SAJP*, this does not mean that *PINS* has failed. On the contrary. The alliance between particular methodologies (critical psychology, hermeneutics, discourse analysis) and political struggle has raised interest in them, since they are the methodologies chosen by young psychologists with radical aspirations and a distaste for statistics.

Distinctive new voices are being heard in South African psychology, though they are still groping for an intellectual synthesis. The alternative to a unified view of psychology is to assume that culture is a conversation conducted from different perspectives in

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different voices. To think of it as a monologue is a simplification which is convenient in a period of struggle but a nuisance after that.

Psychology in South Africa will continue to be transformed to reflect world psychology because the world is being transformed by emerging new movements and new voices.

Dichotomy is an important stage in the development of a conversational view of culture, since those who construct dichotomies do at least recognize that there is more than one voice and one position. They are arguing with a real other. At a later stage we might go beyond dichotomy and recognize that there is even greater diversity in voices and positions.

This is what a cultural psychology should grasp, yet cross-cultural psychology, our most sustained attempt to understand psychology and culture, is still to a large extent a monologue. It originated in the study of "primitive" peoples by Western psychologists and was a one-way discourse. The dichotomy of psychologist and subject was not intended to foster debate between them but to signify a total difference in level of understanding. It is only very recently that the voices of "others" have been heard, with considerable reluctance. No one quite knows how the cross-cultural debate should now be conducted.

The case study in this paper concerns the fate of this monologue – the monologue we have called cross-cultural psychology.

A case study of research: cultural and cross-cultural psychology

In this section I shall attempt a case study of the tradition of cross-cultural psychology in South Africa, focusing on the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition. Cross-cultural psychology is important in a country where there are large cultural differences. It is also reflexively important in the sense that psychology is itself a set of cultures which should be

studied if we are to understand different constructions of psychological reality.

What is a case study? Since a case study is a systematic interpretation of a sequence of events I shall develop a formula for guiding such a study. This formula evaluates traditions by looking at their impact or success in occupying various niches in society. The formula includes impact on both the knowledge discipline and on society as a whole. Some movements, such as the psychoanalytic movement, have made both a scientific and a social impact. Ideally, a formula for justifying the selection of a case history should enable us to nominate as many cases as possible, put them through the formula, and rank them. The formula presented here will not enable us to do this since we cannot assign exact numerical values to each element. What it will enable us to do is to show that the case selected is important. A case study may be followed by some evaluation or even prescription.

The formula for our case study follows from the observation that scientific movements must make both an external (societal) impact and an internal (scientific) impact if they are to flourish. We construct our evaluation by using these two terms:

societal impact + scientific impact = importance

Let us now attempt to expand the terms of the notional formula.

We assess the *societal impact* of a movement by looking at its *utility* and *transformational* value. The degree to which people consult its practitioners gives us some idea of the utility of a tradition. It makes a transformational impact if it enters popular culture and shapes a new view of the world — as fundamental discoveries such as relativity theory, psychoanalysis, and the theory of evolution by natural selection have done. To the extent that many South African psychologists have combated popular theories of racial inferiority and crude comparisons of "civilized" and "primitive" intelligence, they

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have made a societal impact, even if only in teaching many thousands of students over many decades. Fundamental reshaping of culture is rare, and yet such a reshaping has come in the move towards multiculturalism. Cross-cultural psychologists have played a small part in this move, though I shall contend that the extent of their contribution has been limited by a monologic conception of psychological investigation. Cross-cultural psychologists (and many other psychologists), have played a part in undermining ethnocentric understanding of the human mind. Cross-cultural psychologists have also made an impact on practice in industry and aspire to have an impact on mental health practices (Swartz 1985; 1986; 1987; Swartz and Foster, 1991).

The *scientific impact* of scientists belonging to a movement can be assessed by the use which other scientists make of their work, as shown by citations and invitations to participate in research networks or the institutional structure of science. Significant work may be incorporated in textbooks and regarded as "fact". At the highest level of influence, scientific work may produce a transformational effect by changing the language and practices of science. An immediate assessment of use is through citations.

I shall use as reference points the work of two psychologists associated with South Africa – Biesheuvel and Danziger – who have made a sustained scientific impact on cross-cultural and cultural psychology, the former particularly on cross-cultural and the latter on cultural psychology. We shall see that the former is part of a declining tradition and the latter part of an ascending tradition, as assessed by citations in the literature and analysis of the trends of research on culture. Since the beginning of this year a new journal (*Culture and Psychology*) has begun publishing articles which reflect the new trend. Part of the irony – and an indication of the effects of apartheid – is the fact that Danziger's most significant work has been undertaken largely in exile in Canada.

Since this is not an attempt to rewrite South African psychology by pretending that Danziger never left the country (though for many of his students who remained here his influence remained), I shall concentrate on the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition and refer to Danziger's work only to show how the new paradigm of cultural psychology is displacing the paradigm of cross-cultural research.

A rough assessment of this displacement can be made by showing the increasing citations of cultural psychology as represented by Danziger. We see these citations rising to the level formerly occupied by Biesheuvel (no chronological comparison is attempted since Biesheuvel was of a different generation and at his peak some 10 or 15 years before Danziger).

CITATIONS: DANZIGER/BIESHEUVEL						
	1966/1970	1971/1976	1976/1980	1981/1985	1986/1990	1991/1993
D	23	37	44	93	83	124
B	94	79	55	36	20	10

This can be no more than a rough index of the rise of cultural psychology, especially since much of the change occurs on a broad front which includes those among the ranks of cross-cultural psychologists as well as social psychologists.

Selecting cross-cultural psychology

How can we justify selecting cross-cultural psychology as the tradition to be studied?

First, we can justify it in terms of citations. Probably the most cited work in the history of South African psychology was W. Hudson's group of papers on cross-cultural comparisons of pictorial depth perception, starting with the 1960 paper in the *Journal of Social Psychology*. Between 1966 and 1980 Hudson was cited 350 times.

Second, Biesheuvel was the most cited researcher in South Africa for a variety of papers. He was born in 1908 and made his biggest scientific impact in the 1940s and 1950s, yet at the time my citation counts begin, in 1966, he was still being referred to with far greater frequency than anyone else in South Africa. Between 1966 and 1980 he was cited 228 times.

Third, in terms of societal impact, the cross-cultural work in the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition was important. During World War Two the group out of which the NIPR eventually evolved set the pace in the selection of pilots and artillery men. After the war it expanded into industrial testing. Their work led them more and more deeply into fundamental research in cross-cultural psychology. And prior to that, Biesheuvel had published his refutation of Fick's racist views.

Where does this leave "relevance", an issue which has been so much discussed in South African psychology? Relevance refers largely to the transformational impact of a tradition, to its capacity to bring about a desirable social state of affairs. Those demanding more relevance wish for an increased transformational impact on society. The difficulty of the task is soon seen when one reads through *Psychology in Society*, where calls to relevance are frequent and substantive contributions are rare. Yet the picture is not as bleak as it might seem. Many substantive contributions are found in the establishment journal – the *SAJP* – and in the many books and chapters by South African psychologists on torture, health, medical psychology, violence, reducing prejudice in organizations, child development, community psychology, clinical practice, the development of knowledge and methodology.

Finally, we select cross-cultural psychology because it demonstrates the assumption that most psychologists have made in all countries: that the relation of psychologist to subject is a monologue, not a conversation. The psychologist studies the subject. The words of the subject are not conversation, they are part of the data. The words of

the psychologist are theory, not part of the data. The transformation of this into a dialogic approach is a significant paradigm shift.

This outlines the case for making a study of the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition of cross-cultural psychology.

The Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition of cross-cultural psychology

The South African tradition of basic and applied research in cultural and cross-cultural psychology has been important and is likely to continue to be important. We may refer particularly to Biesheuvel and his team at the National Institute for Personnel Research – Reuning, Poortinga, Grant, Winters, Mundy-Castle, Hudson, Verster and others. There have been many other contributors outside the NIPR tradition (Liddell, Miller, Bentley, Swartz, Vorster and Schuring, Manganyi), but it will not be possible to comment on the work of all.

We now turn to the principal representatives of the Biesheuvel tradition and show how they worked towards clarifying both the cultural and the cross-cultural approaches to psychology.

Biesheuvel made his impact in at least four distinct ways. The first was his own research; the second was his organization of teams for applied research; the third was consultation and practice; and the fourth was his participation in international organized science.

Consider the first contribution: fundamental research. Biesheuvel's *African Intelligence* (1943, but completed by 1941) was a refutation of Fick's influential monograph *The educability of the South African native (1939)*. It was an early counter to the "race science" Manganyi referred to in his 1993 chapter and it became a fundamental critique of the assumptions underlying cross-cultural intelligence testing. I agree with Verster's (1991) evaluation of it as Biesheuvel's most important scientific contribution and "an international landmark". This is confirmed by Vernon (1969). What was it about? Fick had found that the measured mental age of the Union African population was

between 4 and 5 years below that of the Union European population. He then went on to claim that the observed differences were innate and permanent. In this he was not alone. He could claim much support in both American and European psychology. Against the background of triumphant fascism, Biesheuvel undertook the important task of showing that these arguments were false.

Here I shall merely refer to what was novel in Biesheuvel's argument. He realized that in order to test the alternative hypothesis that the differences in measured intelligence were the result of environmental differences, he would have to "assess precisely the degree of inferiority of the African environment" (1943:229). Measured differences in average levels of schooling, parental education, home accommodation, and nutrition were calculated for black and white populations. He found that "the mean African (black) social environment could be held to be more than 3 SDs (standard deviations) below the mean European (white) social environment" (1943:223). This meant that "in respect of some environmental circumstances the African average was equal or even inferior to the European worst" (1943:222), a finding which supported the hypothesis that the differences in intelligence scores were due to differences in social environment. Furthermore, the environmental hypothesis was more economical than the innateness hypothesis: why account for differences in intelligence by unknown factors when one could do so by observable differences in social environment?

Correction of the African estimated mean brings it to 100, which is the European mean. Biesheuvel allows for the possibility that there may be qualitative differences between European and African intelligence, "in which judgements of value based on a particular cultural outlook would be bound to play an important part" (1943:223). In this he introduces one of the fundamental assumptions of cultural psychology and accepts the possibility of decentration from the Western norm.

In addition to the scientific impact of this work, it made a transformational impact. It was bitterly resented by Afrikaner nationalists, a resentment which was increased by his later work (Biesheuvel, 1952; Biesheuvel and Liddicoat, 1959, 1960) on the intelligence of English and Afrikaans speakers, interpreted as a denigration of Afrikaners. He and Liddicoat conjectured that the inferior scores of Afrikaans-speaking adults as compared to English-speaking adults derived from the "greater simplicity and lower stimulus value of the culture of the Afrikaans language group" (Biesheuvel and Liddicoat, 1960: 13). Strong words indeed to a National Party government! The conflict continued when he was instructed not to use the term "African" in NIPR reports and when an embargo was placed on Sherwood's Ph.D. concerning the occupational attitudes of black civil servants. Biesheuvel was tipped off by a Stellenbosch friend that he should step down from his directorship of the NIPR or be "got at" by the Broederbond (Verster, 1991). In 1962 he moved to South African Breweries, where he was able to combine his scientific work with membership of the board and the position of Personnel Director.

One should read the impact of his work on African intelligence in particular as part of the series of arguments by which the South African Institute of Race Relations (which published the book) opposed racism.

This opposition to racism continued in his stress on cultural factors in differences between Afrikaans speakers and English speakers.

I shall emphasize one additional point here. Biesheuvel demonstrated that multidisciplinary teams under good leadership can solve pressing problems. During the war the Aptitude Test Section under his leadership solved the pressing problem of selecting aircrews and ground staff. There are urgent educational problems today. Most universities have their own programmes of research in these fields. But

why should we not apply the methods which were so useful during the war?

The social and scientific impact of cross-cultural psychology under Biesheuvel was considerable. For details of the history of the NIPR and Biesheuvel's international role, one may consult Verster (1991) and Louw (1986). My conclusion is that the "Biesheuvel tradition" was important by virtue of both social and its scientific impact. It continued to make itself felt in widely cited papers such as Hudson's (1960) work on pictorial depth perception and in applications such as the General Adaptability Battery.

I shall skip the early years and go immediately to the work of Verster and Prinsloo (1988) on culture and intelligence. What they found is that the mean population scores of Afrikaans and English speakers on intelligence tests have tended to converge over the last four or five generations. They then attempt to press this further: Can we distinguish between tests which are relatively sensitive to culture and tests which are relatively culture-free? The former would include, most typically, verbal-number tests since they are so obviously influenced by schooling, and the latter would include, most typically, nonverbal tests. It would follow that (a) populations which are not genetically different should be closer to each other on nonverbal measures than on verbal-number measures; and (b) acculturation should reduce any differences in verbal-number measures to a greater extent than it can reduce differences in nonverbal measures. What they found was that the differences between the two populations are greater on nonverbal than on verbal-number tests, and that the convergence is greater for verbal-number tests than for nonverbal tests. It appears that one would have to accept either that the populations are genetically distinct or that the nonverbal tests are no more culture-free than the verbal-numerical tests are. They accept the latter. They propose that there are informal cultural processes which are more stable across generations and that these processes create

differences in nonverbal scores. Here we see a good example of the kind of choice which psychologists frequently have to make, especially in the field of cross-cultural studies and even more especially in the study of cultural differences in intelligence. Do the results mean what the theory says they mean? Or is it time to move to a new approach and a new theory? Verster and Prinsloo opt for a different approach, one which Verster had already done some work on. They call for a revision of the constructs of fluid and crystallized intelligence. Even more radically, they suggest that the concept of "ability" as a source of explanation of differences between groups and individuals needs reappraisal. Though "ability" may "continue to have utility in applied settings, it may well have outlived its usefulness in psychological theory" (1986:556). A good reason for this is given elsewhere. Especially in the case of illiterate or semi-literate samples in Africa, where good predictive validities are commonly found with virtually any psychometric test (Grant, 1970; Kendall, 1976), it is likely that factors extrinsic to the test task, such as communication skills, account for common variance between test (ability to follow instructions) and criterion (ability to profit from instruction) (Verster, 1988: 131).

And, since factor structures in Africa are unstable across different studies, we cannot interpret the results as indicating a structure of fixed abilities (Verster, 1988:131).

We may now summarize the choices which apparently face the researcher. The first is to pursue universal abilities by looking for culture-free tests. This seems a hopeless choice, given the complications of formal and informal cultural influences. The difficulty of the task is further complicated by the instability of factor structure due to extraneous influences such as communication skills. The second choice is to identify abilities within each culture, using tests found within that culture. The difficulties are twofold: first, comparability and second, abilities reflect product rather than process, or phenotype rather than genotype, surface rather than deep structure.

The third choice is to study process. Verster made this choice, using the information processing approach. It is important to note what universal is being sought in such studies. What is looked for is not comparability of score levels but similarities and differences in basic processing of information. By adopting this approach, the researcher seeks to decentre from culture. What is sought is to identify the same basic processes of information processing across cultures, not to rank cultures for success in performance.

A hierarchy of performance processes and an executive are postulated. The performance processes are universal basic building blocks of cognition, and the executive is a more variable system which governs the performance processes. Examples of the performance processes and associated tests are psychomotor performance (selecting keys and tapping them), sensory performance (two-choice luminosity discrimination), perceptual performance (finding embedded figures), and conceptual performance (figure analogies). The results indicate that it is possible to identify the same basic processes in black and white samples. It is difficult to disagree with Verster's suggestion that the cross-cultural method should be used in testing all process theories. The difficulty soon becomes clear. The more practical we want our work to be, the more we need to work with a large set of special "programs " or processes for solving problems, and the less general theoretical interest they seem to have.

To what extent can we say that the Biesheuvel tradition of South African psychology succeeded in decentering from a Eurocentric position? To what extent did it succeed in moving from classical cross-cultural psychology towards cultural (socio-historical) psychology? And if it did not succeed, who has taken up the challenge?

When we look at the founding fathers of cross cultural research (Rivers, 1901; Levy-Bruhl, 1923), we see that they elevated prejudice into theory in their construct of "primitive mentality" and that this approach was consolidated in the first tests in South Africa (Martin,

1915, cited in Verster, 1988:129; Fick, 1929; 1939). This approach was decisively refuted by Biesheuvel (1943) and the implications of this were pursued in numerous investigations at the NIPR. Yet studies of abilities remained ethnocentric, even though they attempted to uncover the structure of abilities in different cultures, since they did not use indigenous reasoning. A contribution to the use of indigenous reasoning was made by Irvine (1970) and followed up later (Irvine 1988). This step from classical cross-cultural psychology to indigenous or folk psychology has not, to my knowledge, been followed up in any significant way in South African research. In any case, though such a move would be a partial decentration from one to many points of reference, it would not solve the problem of how to generalize results. That is something that could be achieved only by a comparative study of the processes of social generation of mind, begun with partial success by Luria (1976), and spelt out by Cole (1988).

As we have seen above, the NIPR solution to the problem was different. Verster attempted to avoid ethnocentricity and preserve generalizability by studying processes rather than abilities. Whatever the practical utility of such a move, though, it does not take the crucial step of recognizing that the basic theoretical problem of cultural psychology is the way in which all processes are shaped in different cultures. The more complex the processes, the more evident the cultural influence will be. Cognitive processing models require an executive of some kind, and it is at this level that the influence of culture is most significant, as we see from work on remedial education, such as Feuerstein's.

Evaluation

An evaluation of the Biesheuvel tradition might go as follows. There was a concerted attempt to find culture-free tests and a partial success, achieved by moving from the concept of abilities to universal processes. This is probably a hopeless drive, in which we strip measures of all significance in a search for items which are not

influenced by culture. We find, then, that we have to reintroduce culture by programming the executive with the missing culture.

There was an increasing questioning of Western concepts of abilities as these were found to be unstable from study to study.

In practice there was little attempt to see "Western culture" as one culture among many, since research efforts were often driven by the needs of the mines and industry. It was also difficult – and remains difficult for all psychologists, no matter where they come from – to translate this into theory.

The problem of cultural specification was never solved in a theoretically satisfying way, since it remains at the macro level – terms such as "Western", "black", and "Sotho" culture are still used as broad descriptors in even the most exemplary studies. This is common to cross-cultural psychologists everywhere and is not peculiar to the NIPR tradition. We see the muddle that such descriptions of culture land us in when we look at Liddell's attempts to specify the "cultures" of the disadvantaged children in her study. Liddell (1994) defines the cultural context of children's everyday experiences in the year before school and ends up with a compound of ethnicity (linguistic group), urbanicity (degree of urbanization), and variations in individual community taken in combination with child's household socio-economic status, size, and reliance on subsistence agriculture. It is not possible to get scientifically interesting results with such a mixture of variables. Yet how should culture/environment be defined? Are the two terms coterminous? And even if we find a theory of culture (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky, 1990), how can we use it in studies such as Liddell's?

Macro descriptions may be fortuitously correct for certain purposes where we are talking of relatively isolated cultures which contain many shared programmes for survival. Isolated pockets of Eskimos or Australian Aborigines might each still have their own single culture; for the rest, we have to remember that all reasonably complex

societies contain many cultures. Work remained monologic: the culture of the psychologist was never part of the study.

At the practical level, the Biesheuvel tradition achieved considerable success in the construction of widely used test batteries, incorporating learning principles in the later ones. However, for practical reasons, the NIPR served industry rather than the workers. Nonetheless it showed what could be achieved by a programme of research under good leadership.

Reconstructing South African psychology as cultural psychology

Having criticized the Biesheuvel-NIPR tradition, it is incumbent on me to suggest what cultural psychology should be and how it differs from classical cross-cultural psychology. There is no standard interpretation and there will be many critics of my own position.

The basic question of cultural psychology is: How do different cultures enable people to fulfil the vital functions of survival in different environments? The first interface at which we can study culture is the interface with the natural environment (the cultural transformation of nature).

The second interface may be even more interesting. It is the interface with other cultures, including the culture of the psychologist, resulting in culture conflict, distortion and assimilation. It is at the second interface that it is impossible to treat the data as monologic, since there is by definition a relation between cultures. Though this is true of the culture/nature interface, since the psychologist's culture is always involved in a cross-cultural study, it is inescapably true at the culture/culture interface.

There are four broad moves towards working on these problems:

At the level of study of the relations between a culture and the natural environment we can still make some progress while leaving the

theorist out of account. The first move is to specify cultural differences as clearly as possible and to derive psychological consequences from these differences. One such specification is the difference between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles. The hypothesis is that these different lifestyles result in consistent differences in the development of a capacity to solve spatial problems, with nomadic peoples being relatively better than sedentary peoples. This approach to mind, culture and environment is the eco-cultural approach to psychology (Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen, 1992; Dasen and Ribaupierre, 1987). It has profound implications, leading to a "difference" rather than "deficit" understanding of mental functioning. The deficit hypothesis implies that some cultures are deficient and that members of these cultures require remedial education; the difference hypothesis implies that we should search for existing capacities and build on these (Dasen, 1994).

The second move is to study the interactions of very specific traditions in some detail, since this will tell us something about the cultural transformation of nature as well as the conflict of cultures. Some of the most convenient traditions to study are knowledge traditions such as "science" or "psychology", since they can be studied over long periods of time. By studying the discourses and practices which scientists engage in to construct reality and to propagate their particular construction of reality in competition with other traditions, we can learn something about both the culture/nature and culture/culture interfaces. A telling example of such an approach is Danziger's (1990) *Constructing the subject*, in which a link is made between the social niches discovered by psychologists and their methodologies for constructing psychological objects. One example is that, given the social demand for sorting and ranking people by intelligence and personality, psychologists began to construct the methodology for doing just this, and to conceptualize personality and intelligence in dimensional terms. The strategies of competition of movements can

also be studied in detail to shed light on the dissemination of cultural practices (Du Preez, 1991).

A third move is fundamentally dialogic and we may summarize it by the proposition: To understand cultures, study conflict between cultures. At its most threatening, this means conflict between the psychologist's culture and the culture of the persons being studied. Then all the anxieties and the countertransferences will be at their most powerful. But why should one do such a risky thing? Firstly, it is often necessary, since we find ourselves in the middle of social conflicts we wish to understand. Secondly, psychological theory is often achieved by those who take their place at the centre of painful conflict. There is little point in an encyclopaedic approach to culture, since it ends up as a list of peculiar features which describe each culture "in itself". In real social interactions each culture consists of gestures for accepting or rejecting other cultures. The rule is change and displacement, assimilation and rejection. Consider how we might apply this approach to the problem raised in Liddell's study above. If we study cognitive growth as a conflict of cultures, then we study the process as a dialogue of acceptance and rejection, of accusation and denial. We identify conflicts which result in the rejection of instruments of performance in a specific relationship between cultures. The problems of black children in schools might be studied dialogically: what does rejecting an education signify in a particular cultural conversation? A mere cognitive deficit approach is unlikely to uncover the answers to this question. The most important studies of cultural conflict are still those based on Fanon's dissection of the psychological dynamics of cultural struggle, of assimilation and separation from the dominant culture, and there has been great interest in his work in South Africa, over many years.

A fourth move, methodologically the most sophisticated, is to study the effect which an experimenter has on members of a culture and the effect which they have on the experimenter – transference and

countertransference (Devereux, 1976). Devereux suggests that the peculiar difficulties of studying culture can be understood only by acknowledging the anxiety of the social scientist. Theory is data and should be tested by both the "subjects" and outside observers.

At this stage a table may be useful in summarizing the main features of cross-cultural, indigenous and cultural psychology.

Summary schema of decentration		
Cross–cultural psychology	Indigenous psychology	Cultural psychology
Western reference implicit	multiple references	multiple references
compare performance	avoid comparison	compare
broad "culture"	broad "culture"	detailed microcultures
static perspective	static perspective	historical perspective
single stable reality	multiple stable reality	contested reality
monologic	monologic	dialogic

The four methodological moves above are not novel. They should simply be systematically applied. The major reorientation is to treat the reactions of psychologists – including psychological theories – as data to be included in the study of culture. How can this be done? One way is to start a dialogue with the people being studied. Another is to treat each study systematically as a discourse to be studied by third parties. This leads to an uncovering of subjective positions. It is exactly what we do when we analyse past theories in the social sciences: we ask what interests they advanced, what kind of subjective positions they presupposed, what strategies they employed, and this is now commonplace in cultural studies. What is suggested here is that the systematic application of this approach to contemporary theories is

of interest with innovative approaches to the social problems of the day.

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Organizational survey interventions

Peter E. Franks and
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Introduction

The rapid socio-political change in South Africa since the early eighties following the recommendations of the Wiehahn Labour Commission has clearly had an impact on organizations in the private, public and non-governmental sectors. Black trade unions were legalized only in 1982 and the first agreement in industry was signed in 1983. Management in organizations had little previous experience of dealing with the collective power of labour and little experience with negotiation skills because management had remained largely authoritarian in style. Management started to search actively for assistance from lawyers, academics and consultants. Initially there was a flurry of assistance with labour relations and then later with the broader issues of organizational development, especially towards a more participative kind of management. Private and public sector organizations have sought assistance with various issues in organizational development such as strategy, affirmative action, labour relations, recruitment, human resource development, training, social responsibility programmes, housing schemes, pensions and medical aid

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schemes, productivity improvement with the management of change in general.

Organizational surveys have long been used as a means for gaining a clear estimate of the perceptions and feelings of employees towards various organizational issues as well as to evaluate interventions that the organizations have initiated to improve commitment, functioning, morale and so forth.

Before the 1980s organizational surveys were almost always conducted from a purely management perspective. They were treated as the prerogative and preserve of management. The findings were for management's eyes only and were acted upon or ignored at the whim of the chief executives, often with no further discussion. The aspirations and expectations raised by the conduct of the survey were merely left hanging in most cases, while the reports gathered dust on the shelves of the company archives. The frustrated hopes raised by such surveys inevitably contributed to the worsening human and industrial relations climates in these companies and in the country as a whole.

Unfortunately this is still the case with too many surveys conducted today. However, these errors have provided the impetus for the development of the employee survey into a far more robust and dynamic technique. Experience over the past years has led to the emergence of clear guidelines for the implementation of organizational surveys, within the dynamic and highly politicized South African organizational context.

The first and foremost lesson from organizational surveys has been that an employee survey is an intervention in a dynamic context and therefore has to be treated as an intervention. As an intervention it has to be carefully managed so that it builds trust, cooperation, participation and productivity for the organization as a whole. The researcher is at the same time a facilitator with responsibility to all players. The facilitation begins with the first discussion concerning a particular survey. While the organization may present a certain

problem this may not turn out to be the whole story. The facilitation starts as the researchers help the organization to recognize the total problem and the many contributing factors in order for the survey to ask the right questions.

Surveys as a technique are nothing new, however, and the way they have been implemented and the nuances of technique that have developed have turned the simple survey into a tool for launching dialogue and negotiations, i.e. for facilitating conversations across formerly impenetrable barriers. The development of the survey as an intervention process, variously described as a "Communications Audit", "Employee Survey" or "Human Relations Climate Survey" has been explored by a number of researchers (Franks, Glass, Craffert and De Jager (1996); Franks and Cassidy (1994); Franks (1992); Franks and Vink (1990); Franks, Malele, Kure and Ficq (1990); Franks and Louw (1988); Franks, Louw, Vink and Duckitt (1988); Franks (1987); Franks, Cook and Duckitt (1987); Franks and Shane (1987); Franks, Ngwane and Rheeder (1986); Franks and Cook (1983); Watts, 1988; Kampher, 1989; Shaw and Human, 1989; Alfred, 1991; Nasser, *et al*, 1989; SPA Consultants, 1992; Shane, 1993; Cassidy, 1994; Hall, 1996), many consultants and private, public and civil organizations that do not publish their research for general or specialist consumption. It must be remembered that in most cases such research is aimed at illuminating and informing practice in a very particular situation and not at illuminating universally applicable theoretical formulations, although they may in fact do the latter also. Unfortunately most such work is never made available for academic scrutiny, further limiting this latter possibility.

The political transition in South Africa has created a need for methodological reflection in a search for appropriate methodologies aimed at transforming South Africa through reconstruction and development. The demands of the real situation have forced an engagement with the process of change and the recognition of conflicts of interest for what they are, calling for the creative handling

of conflicts rather than denying them through one form of domination or another.

The situation has never allowed for the denial of conflicts of interests to which South Africa's historical preoccupations attest. This dynamic and conflict filled situation has rendered the so-called normative human sciences inappropriate. The human sciences in South Africa have found ways to contribute to the change process by acting as catalysts and facilitators of dialogue and consultation aimed at negotiating strategies for the development of communities and organizations.

This development of organizational surveys has been deeply rooted in the needs of South Africa's complex socio-political milieu, influenced by the following strands:

■ Development of labour relations in the South African context, the increasing use of mediation in the resolution of labour conflicts and the increasing popularity of notions of co-determination at the shop floor and in the boardrooms.

■ Apartheid's demise and the emergence of a negotiation paradigm in South African politics.

■ The worldwide development of strategic notions of participative management culminating in the essential concept of the learning organization which can be distilled from the vast noise of the multiplicity of buzzwords.

■ The development of notions of participative and action research.

■ The developing notions of conversation, dialogue and negotiation.

While the search continues at the shop floor for an appropriate *modus operandi*, this milieu has created a crucible for the development of appropriate research methodologies and demanded that issues surrounding the implementation of research findings be incorporated into research design.

Organizational surveys and their implementation

After years of experience with organizational surveys, human resource practitioners have come to realize that it is the implementation of the findings from the surveys that counts; if this does not happen they merely catch dust on a shelf . The following lessons have been learnt from the successful and unsuccessful implementation of a multitude of experiments with organizational surveys.

The following basic issues are involved in the implementation of organizational surveys:

■ Development is facilitated.
■ Development is an interactive and collaborative effort.
■ Research/intervention is a reciprocal process of give and take; it is a relationship.
■ Researchers/facilitators have particular biases of which they must be aware.
■ Whoever requested the research/intervention also has biases, and therefore levels of control and inclusion must be negotiated at the outset.
■ The investigation intervenes in a context of power and politics, and the researchers have to interpret all inputs within this dynamic context in an unbiased manner.
■ A neutral and facilitative stance is essential in order to gain the trust (legitimacy), participation and commitment of all parties.

Organizational surveys can be designed to provide the following:

■ A scan of the attitudes and perceptions of staff at all levels of the organization.
■ An in-depth understanding of the dynamics and nuances of the human relations climate.
■ An indication of issues requiring attention from management.
■ A baseline from which to measure organizational development.
■ A means of sensitizing staff as to the concerns and policies of management.
■ A platform for dialogue/negotiation around:
    ■ Labour/human relations
    ■ Human resources planning

- Employee development
- Developing management styles and strategies
- Enhancing communication
- Balancing the interests of production with those of human resources development
- The company's role in social development

All or some of the following issues can be covered by such investigations:

- Management and supervision
- Discrimination and favouritism
- Communication, formal and informal
- Company policy
- Commitment to company
- Recruitment and selection
- Training and development
- Grievance procedures
- Remuneration and benefits
- Health and safety
- Affirmative action and equal opportunity
- Social responsibility

The research and workshop process

The beginning of an intervention process is the research investigation of the perceptions of the management, staff, or receivers of service from an organization, or whatever configuration of people is concerned in the functioning of an organization. This initial phase provides a focus for the essential process of building trust and communication among the players. The intervention of a research team, standing outside the dynamics of intra-organizational politics, provides a somewhat "objective" view of the particular dynamics of the organization or community, enabling the facilitation of a concrete dialogue concerning implementable strategies, provided that trust and consensus are built through the process.

If trust is broken, by either or all of the parties or as the result of partiality on the part of the researchers/facilitators, conflict will be heightened. It is the rigid adherence to a neutral stance on the part of

the researchers/facilitators which makes this kind of research so challenging and exhausting. However, it is this same neutrality which enables the building of trust and consensus.

Without the trust of all parties in the process, the trust of the researchers/facilitators among the usually contending parties will remain elusive, except in the most exceptional of circumstances, when, hypothetically speaking, through rejection of the facilitators/investigators by all parties they are brought together in the face of a common enemy. The key to this methodology is process. This process has a number of overlapping yet discrete stages. The stages in the process are as follows:

First contact

The initial research briefs, whether presented by the management of the organization or another party, usually request assistance with general organizational development issues including communication, affirmative action and management style, or a more specific issue of wanting an assessment of employees' perceptions regarding a specific aspect of their employment conditions.

The research process starts with the first contact with the client and, as has been pointed out above, this is when the intervention begins. It is clearly the responsibility of the researchers/facilitators to interrogate the brief presented by the client and to attempt to enlighten the client about the implications of such an investigation and about the processes required for the implementation of the research findings, whatever they are. It is well worth warning the clients that if they will not act on the findings, or are uncertain whether they can act on the findings, they would do better not to initiate the process and thereby raise expectations.

Things that need to be taken note of at this initial stage include the following:
- What is the profile of the organization?
- Who made the contact and what is this person's position in the

company? Is this person in a position of power regarding the ultimate execution of the process? Do such contact persons have the CEO's support or are they looking for outside support to convince the CEO of something? Without the support of the CEO or a significant power bloc in top management, implementation is unlikely.

■ What is the presenting problem? Often this is only a symptom of some larger underlying problem in the organization.
■ Who, if anyone, referred the organization to you and why?
■ What is the organization's labour relations record? This would provide valuable information on the stances previously taken by the organization on crucial human relations issues.
■ What union involvement is here?

These essential questions provide valuable background information for initial planning of the strategy and approach. The more homework done by the researchers at this stage the better informed they are for the further negotiation of the research process.

Initial meeting

Through this meeting the research leaders can assess the extent to which the company is ready for and committed to the implementation of a survey process. They can also assess the relationships that have existed or exist with other consultants, as well as the organizations general commitment. This is done though the following:

■ Explore the organization's needs and expectations and those of all role players.
■ Assess top management's commitments and agendas.
■ Explain the process of investigation in general.
■ Acknowledge the issue of raised expectations. Tell the company directly: "If you do not want to act on the findings of the investigation, do not conduct an investigation!" The survey immediately raises employee hopes and there are expectations of management to act on the findings. It is thus crucial that management realize that to do the survey and not take action on the findings would do irreparable harm to the employees level of

essential if we are to understand what they do, what they achieve, and what they are used for. This sort of analysis should complement well-established criteria for testing the truth value of theory. A knowledge of the use of a social theory is an essential aspect of its development.

Subjectivity is to the social sciences what elementary particles are to physics. Subjectivity is continually being created by social instruments such as stories, contracts, sermons, games, marriages, work practices, or theories in which persons relate to each other. The fundamental discovery of the social sciences is that persons are in a state of simultaneous readiness to engage in different discourses/practices. That is why "the self" is so elusive. The important questions are: which discourses? which practices? and when? That is for cultural psychology to reveal.

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11

Cross-cultural measurement in the human sciences

N.C.W. Claassen

Measurement and culture

Narration and description are part of most scientific disciplines. Measurement can be seen as a particular instance of description. In the physical sciences there is a large degree of consensus on the nature and stability of measures used to describe phenomena. This kind of almost universal consensus is less prevalent when it comes to description and measurement in the social sciences. As is the case in the physical sciences, measurement is used in the social sciences in an attempt to refine descriptions in a particular way. Psychological measurement is one of the mathematically more refined areas of measurement in the social sciences. The term cross-cultural measurement is usually used to refer to the measuring of the same or largely the same constructs in different cultural contexts.

Culture has been defined in many ways (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Retief, 1988). Different cultures spin different webs with nodes in different places and strands connected differently to these nodes. Kroeber and Kluckhohn made a distinction between explicit and implicit culture. Explicit culture refers to the set of observable acts and products regularly found in a group. Implicit culture refers to the

organizing principles inferred as underlying these regularities on the basis of consistent patterns of explicit culture. Whether implicit culture and traits actually exist in their own right or exist only in the cognitive life of observers is an epistemological and methodological question of long standing. For present purposes the definition offered by Berry et al. (1992:1) will be adopted. They define culture as "the shared way of life of a group of people".

Research in anthropology has a long experience of working in virtually all the world's cultures. To a large extent disciplines like anthropology, ecology and biology are naturalistic disciplines, basically concerned with understanding things as they are in nature. Edgerton (1974:63-64) has argued that "at heart, anthropologists are naturalists whose commitment is to the phenomena themselves. Anthropologists have always believed that human phenomena can best be understood by procedures that are primarily sensitive to context, be it situational, social, or cultural". Anthropology can be seen as residing at the population level rather than at the individual level. In contrast psychology resides mainly at the individual level. Psychologists acknowledge experimentation "as their ultimate means of verification" (Edgerton, 1974:63). This approach would include not just experiments in the strict sense but also tests, interviews, and other methods in which the researcher constructs an artificial situation within which to control or constrain behaviour in order to measure it.

Cross-cultural psychology draws mainly upon the two established traditions of anthropology and psychology. Cross-cultural psychology aims at explaining population-level influences on individual-level psychological functioning. Berry et al. (1992:2) define cross-cultural psychology as "the study of similarities and differences in individual psychological functioning in various cultural and ethnic groups; of the relationships between psychological variables and sociocultural, ecological and biological variables; and of current changes in these variables." On the continuum from pure phenomenology to unrestricted positivism, they position themselves on the positivistic side,

though closer to the middle than most experimental psychologists. They align themselves with the belief that the basis of science is formed by empirical studies, that is studies designed in such a way that the data can show the beliefs and expectations of the researchers to be incorrect. In other words theoretical notions have to be open to empirical scrutiny.

Ethnocentrism

The cross-cultural study of differences may lead to their being viewed as in some way deficient. Sumner (1906) coined the term "ethnocentrism" to denote the tendency to use the standard of one's own group as the true standard when studying other groups. Ethnocentrism is likely to result in the placing of one's own group at the top of a hierarchy and the ranking of all other groups as lower. LeVine and Campbell (1972) have suggested that this tendency may even be a universal feature of cultural group relations. However, Berry *et al.* (1992:2) argue that this need not be a feature of cross-cultural psychology. They argue for a position that assumes no evaluative stance with respect to differences. Each varying phenomenon should be viewed in its own context and described and interpreted relative to the cultural and ecological situation in which it occurs.

An obvious example from the domain of social behaviour is that of showing respect. It is the custom of sections of the Northern Sotho people to hold the hand in front of the mouth as a sign of respect while addressing someone the speaker respects. It is difficult to avoid imposing one's own cultural in interpreting others' behaviour. One may, for example, deduce that the other person is shy – a quite inappropriate attribution. Another example that comes to mind is an item in a test for the assessment of intellectual abilities that was designed in a primarily Western cultural context. Subsequently it was planned to develop norms for Indian South Africans and the items were sent to cultural experts for comments. One item required the testee to recognize and name a pig. This item was fairly easy for the

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original population for which the test had been standardized. However, the large majority of Indians in South Africa are Muslims and it is expected of them neither to look at a pig nor to mention the name. An inappropriate response from a conservative Muslim child can clearly mean something quite different from that of a child belonging to the population in which the test was developed.

As seen in the examples above, the meaning of behaviour can easily be misconstrued from another ethnocentric viewpoint. Another obvious danger is the introduction of culture-specific meaning with instruments that were originally designed in another culture. Berry *et al.* (1992:8) firmly state: "If there is one message that emerges from knowledge accumulated so far, it is that one should never assume an item or a task in a psychological instrument to have the same meaning cross-culturally." A more subtle effect of ethnocentrism lies in the choice of research topics. Psychologists from Third World countries have lamented the lack of societal relevance in cross-cultural research (Berry *et al.*, 1992). A final level at which ethnocentrism is likely to affect cross-cultural research is in the formulation of theories. Our notions of ideas and behaviour have cultural antecedents with the result that even theory-driven research is likely to be affected by cultural biases. However, by recognizing the limitations of our current knowledge and by seeking to extend our data and theory to other cultures we can reduce the culture-bound nature of measuring instruments based on Western psychology. This endeavour exposes the cross-cultural psychologist to the risk of even more ethnocentrism as it involves handling the data from other cultures. Nisbet (1971:95) has been extremely critical of the cross-cultural method and argued that the comparative method is "profoundly ethnocentric" and just another way of placing people in a hierarchy with European cultures at the top and others ranked below. Psychology as it is known today in all probability contains strong ethnocentric elements reflecting specific manifestations of behaviour from the industrial urban societies where psychological science has largely been developed. However, cross-

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cultural psychology does offer a way towards a more profound understanding of human behaviour in a variety of contexts and the explicit recognition of the potential for ethnocentrism is a first step towards its control. Replication of studies by researchers belonging to the cultures concerned was proposed by Campbell (1970) as one way of guarding against ethnocentrism. Nevertheless there remains an inherent ambiguity attending the interpretation of any observed behavioural differences between cultural groups: Are they a valid indication of differences in psychological functioning or are they merely an artefact of the methods used?

A framework for cross-cultural measurement

It is useful to have a framework for organizing various aspects relevant to cross-cultural measurement. Berry *et al.* (1992:11) present such a framework which they call a conceptual scheme rather than a theoretical model from which specific testable hypotheses can be derived. It can be seen as a general guide to classes of variables and their relevance for the explanation of cross-cultural differences and similarities in human behaviour and experience. The framework is presented in Figure 1.

The flow of the figure is from *left to right*, with population-level variables conceived of as influencing the individual outcomes. This general flow is intended to correspond to the interests of cross-cultural psychology: the researchers wish to account for individual and group differences in psychological characteristics as a function of population-level factors. However, it is obvious that a full model (that is, one that attempts to specify relationships in the real world completely) would have numerous feedback arrows representing influences by individuals on the other variables in the framework. However, for ease of presenting the framework, only two feedback relationships are illustrated in Figure 1 (individuals influencing their ecological and socio-political contexts), and this should be taken to signal the

Figure 1: General conceptual framework of relationships among classes of variables employed in cross-cultural measurement (Berry et al., 1992)
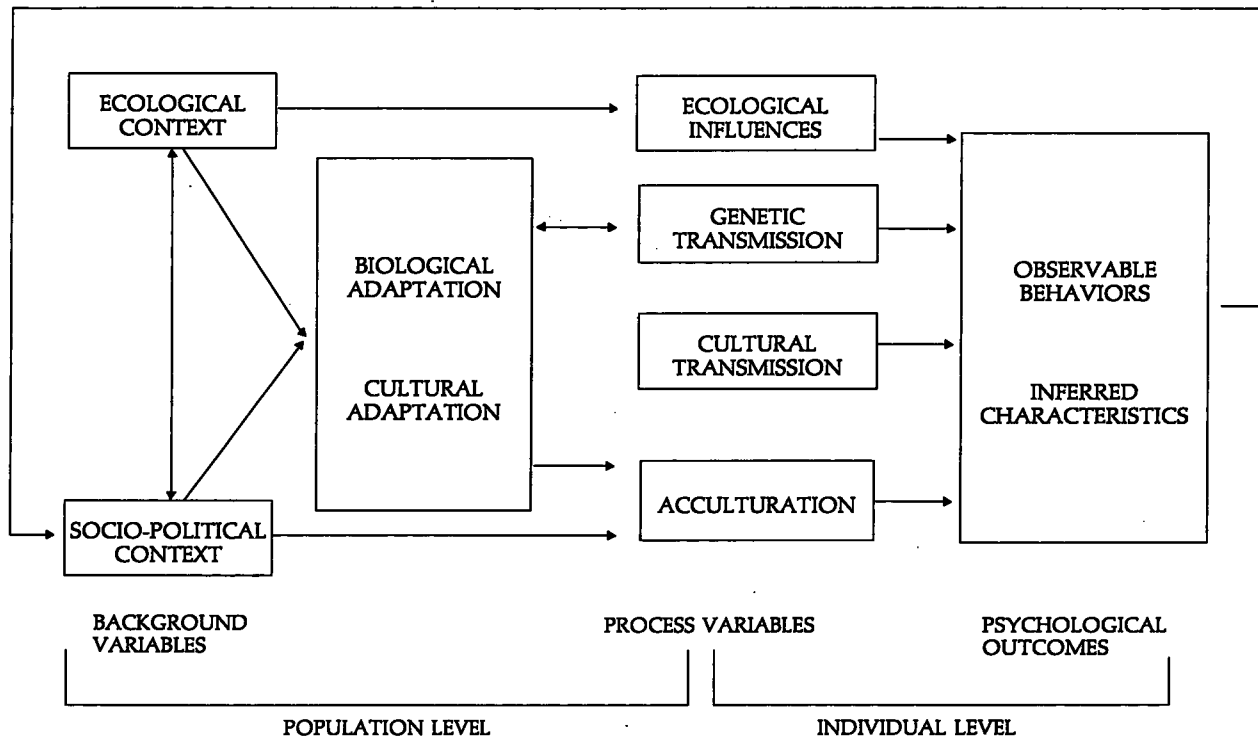
presence of feedback in the framework more generally, even though not all relationships are indicated in the figure.

At the extreme left are two major classes of influence (background variables of *ecological* context and *socio-political* context), while at the extreme right are the psychological characteristics that are usually the focus of psychological research (including both observable behaviours and inferred characteristics, such as motives, abilities, traits and attitudes). The two middle sets of variables (process variables) represent the transmission or influence from population variables to individuals. Both biological and cultural factors are included.

The *ecological context* is the setting in which human organisms and the physical environment interact. It is best understood as a set of *relationships* that provide a range of life possibilities for a population. The central feature of this ecological context is *economic activity*. Each form of economic activity implies a different kind of relationship between the local human population and the animal and physical resources of their habitat. These relationships in turn imply varying cultural, biological and psychological outcomes. However, not all outcomes can be seen as being the result of ecological relationships. They also take the view that culture and individual behaviour are affected by influences stemming from culture contact in the *socio-political* context of one's group. These come about with *acculturation* because of such historical and contemporary experiences as colonial expansion, international trade, invasion and migration. When ecological, biological, cultural and acculturational factors are identified and taken into consideration, we should be able to account for how and why people differ from one another, and also why they are the same.

Cross-cultural measurement

The meaning of behaviour is dependent on the cultural context in which it occurs. This view is illustrated by the following remark from

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Przeworski and Teune (1970:92): "For a specific observation a belch is a belch and nepotism is nepotism. But within an inferential framework, a belch is an 'insult' or a 'compliment' and nepotism is 'corruption' or 'responsibility'." This is true not only for behaviour observed in daily life, but also for reactions elicited with instruments such as standardized interviews, questionnaires and psychometric tests.

Berry (1980) proposed a scheme for integrating contexts and outcomes at four levels. The scheme is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Scheme for integrating contexts and outcomes at four levels (after Berry, 1980)

Ecological	- - - - - - -	Customs
Experiential	- - - - - - -	Repertoire
Situational	- - - - - - -	Actions
Assessment	- - - - - - -	Scores
CONTEXT		**BEHAVIOURS**
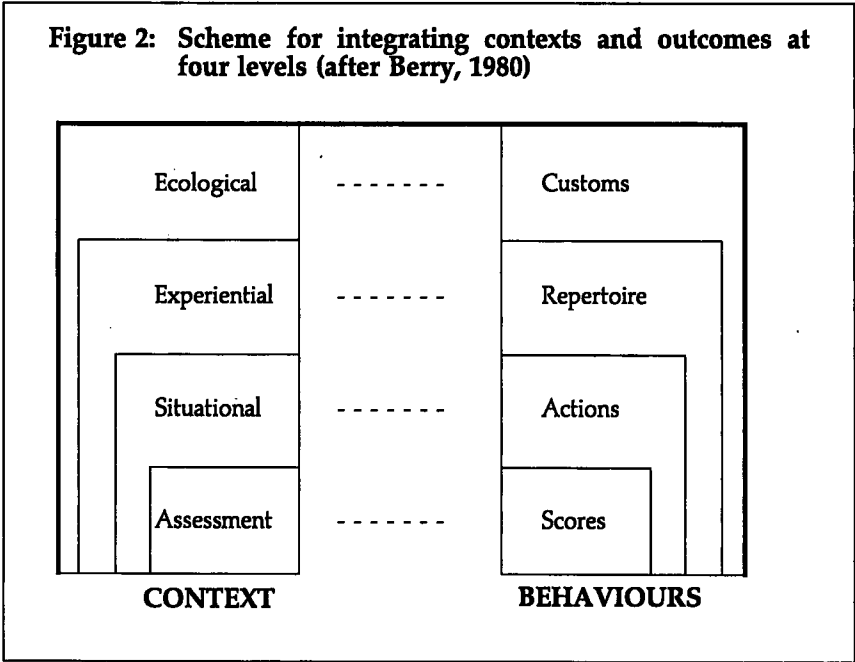
Psychological effects or outcomes are linked to their contexts, ranging from naturalistic forms of research at the top to controlled forms of research at the bottom. The ecological context consists of all the relatively stable and permanent characteristics of the habitat that provide the context for human action and includes the population-level variables identified in Figure 1: the ecological context, the socio-political context, and the general cultural and biological adaptations

made by the group. Nested in this ecological context is the experiential context, which refers to that pattern of recurrent experiences that provides a basis for individual learning and development. These variables include such day to day experiences as child rearing and education. Nested in the experiential context is the situational context. This refers to the limited set of environmental circumstances that account for particular behaviours at a given time. They include the learning of specific roles of social interactions. The fourth context, the assessment context, refers to tests, questionnaires or interviews that were designed by the psychologist to elicit a particular response or test score. The four behavioural outcomes corresponding to these contexts are customs, repertoire of behaviour, actions and scores. The assessment context may or may not be nested in the first three contexts. *The degree to which it is nested represents the ecological validity of the task.*

In many or most cases scores elicited may have the same psychological meaning; however, this need not necessarily be the case. When scores on identical instruments do not have the same psychological meaning in particular contexts they are not directly comparable, and in those particular contexts they provide a biased reflection of the construct assessed. Four categories of equivalence have been identified along a continuum of experimental rigour (Van de Vijver and Poortinga, 1982; Retief, 1988; Verster, 1987). Obtained measures can be classified as conceptually equivalent, functionally equivalent, metrically equivalent or scalar equivalent. Hui and Triandis (1985) proposed a model according to which equivalence may be tested for at the successive levels mentioned. The point of departure is an assumption of the psychic unity of mankind. At the levels of qualitative and conceptual analyses, logical analyses are done. Such analyses presuppose an intimate knowledge of the relevant cultural aspects concerned. From there on various statistical techniques are proposed for testing other levels of equivalence. A detailed exposition

of the Hui and Triandis model as well as an example of how this model was applied to South African data can be found in Claassen (1990). Taylor (1987) and Owen (1992) also gave an overview of test and item bias. Some of these techniques were also applied by Holburn (1992) to various South African tests used in industry. A problem with most of these statistical techniques is that they can indicate differences but do not indicate degree of similarity.

Poortinga (1989) proposed an analysis based on a postulated hypothetical scale and a measurement scale as he thought this would be more fruitful for a psychology working towards universalism. His point of departure was that any meaningful comparison assumes a qualitatively and quantitatively identical scale. This theoretical scale he called a comparison scale or comparison standard. The scale defined by the measurement instrument he called the measurement scale. Data obtained in different cultures are incomparable when they show differences for which there are no corresponding differences on the comparison standard. According to this perspective incomparability is regarded not as a characteristic of the measurement scale but as a characteristic of the data. The same data set can be comparable for one comparison standard and incomparable with respect to some other standard. The term "comparison standard" used here bears more than a passing resemblance to the common construct measured in two cultures by a test found to be scalar equivalent.

The proposed classification scheme of Poortinga (1989) is presented in Figure 3. On the left is the distinction between identical and non-identical domains. An example of identical domains would be knowledge of mathematics in Std 4 in two cultures where the same curriculum had been in place since the first school year of the class concerned and where the same text books had been used. A non-identical domain might be the set of situations that provoke anxiety. A distinction is also made between various levels of inference. The level of inference is low where the measurement instrument can be

constructed by selecting a representative sample of stimuli from the appropriate set of elements (e.g. addition with one-digit numbers).

Figure 3: Scope for valid cross-cultural comparisons of psychological data with inferences considered as generalizations (Poortinga, 1989)

Domain identity	Level of inference		
	Low	Medium	High
	Measurement as sample	Measurement as index	Unconstrained domain
Identical	Comparison generally possible	Comparison uncertain	Not measurable
Non-identical	No valid comparison	No valid comparison	No valid comparison

Medium-level inferences refer to generalizations to domains defined in terms of unobservable psychological traits of individuals. When we talk about cognitive abilities, personality traits, or moral values we refer to unobservable characteristics, often called hypothetical constructs, which are assumed to underlie certain behaviours. Theoretical and empirical relationships, as established in validation research, determine the range of behaviours in a domain at this level. For this kind of inference, instruments are not constructed with a view to obtaining a representative sample of all possible elements. Rather, stimuli are selected that supposedly capture the essence of a trait or ability. A test of spatial relations may for instance consist only of items in which the subject has to reconstruct three-dimensional figures from two-dimensional projections. The mental manipulations needed for correct solutions are seen as the essential core of spatial ability. At the medium level of inference a measurement can be said to serve as an index of the domain of generalization.

High-level inferences involve generalizations to domains that cannot be properly defined in terms of measurement procedures. In

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this category it is not clear which instruments provide valid indices of the domain of interest and which do not. A large variety of observed differences can be explained *post hoc* in terms of a broad conceptual label. Hence Poortinga called it an unconstrained domain. Examples of high-level concepts are "intelligence A", adaptation, and adaptability. Biesheuvel (1972) introduced the concept of adaptability to replace the concept of intelligence. He defined adaptability as the capacity of a population to cope with the demands of a changing environment. Berry *et al. (1992:242) see a difficulty in that adaptability is contingent upon different environmental requirements in each group. How are we to establish that one group has adapted better psychologically to its environment than a second group to another environment? For any answer to a question like this some evidence can be mustered, but it would be hard to be certain about its validity. For this reason they consider generalizations to unconstrained domains as unmeasurable.*

There is one concept for which positions in the literature vary across most of the cells in Figure 3. This is the concept of intelligence. The distinction made by Vernon (1969) between intelligence C, intelligence B and intelligence A comes fairly close to that between the three "level of inference" columns in the table (low, medium and high). The two rows in the table correspond to the two positions on "intelligence" as a cross-culturally identical and non-identical concept respectively.

How can empirical analysis of a data set help to decide on the identity or non-identity of a domain of generalization across cultures? Berry *et al.* (1992:245) propose the assumption of domain identity as a starting point. Incomparability of the data may indicate bias in the instrument or non-identity of the domain of generalization. Strictly speaking there is no evidence to distinguish between incomparability of data and the non-identity of a domain. A persistent failure to construct instruments with which equivalent data can be obtained should ultimately lead the researcher to give up the tentative assumption of domain identity and to argue that non-identity is a

more profitable course for further research. A redefinition of theoretical concepts to bring out what is common in cultures is a plausible first step on this new course.

Measurement in South Africa

Testing and measurement have as goal to reflect some aspect of the world. It can be expected that tests will reflect the nature of the society in which they are used. Right through the colonial, postcolonial and apartheid eras there was a tendency to treat cultural groups separately (Kendall *et al.*, 1988). Separate education systems were in place, and in the workplace certain kinds of tasks were in some cases reserved virtually exclusively for certain races. Mining and industry were organized to make optimal use of the available manpower as it became available in a socially deeply segmented society. Where research into the abilities of South Africans was done people were almost invariably classified along racial lines. This is of course not peculiar to South Africa. Virtually all studies regarding abilities and characteristics of people undertaken all over the world have made use of racial groupings (Irvine & Berry, 1988), and analysed the influence of education and urbanization only at a second stage.

In the post-World War Two era tests were predominantly produced in South Africa by the National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR) and by the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research. The latter was replaced in 1969 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and the NIPR was incorporated into the HSRC in 1986. Most of the tests developed and made available by the HSRC are adequately discussed in *Handbook for the use of Psychological and Scholastic Tests of the HSRC* (Owen & Taljaard, 1996). At the NIPR the focus of test development was on industry, whereas the Institute for Psychological and Edumetric Research (IPER) focused more on tests that would be useful in education. Research into the abilities of people in South Africa has been motivated primarily by pragmatic

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objectives, chiefly in the spheres of assessing educability at school and trainability in the workplace.

The General Adaptability Battery (GAB) was designed for the selection and placement of black mine workers in the South African gold mines (Biesheuvel, 1949). The rationale behind the construction of the GAB is set out in Biesheuvel (1972). It is stated there that since Africans are undergoing cultural change, it is important to measure their capacity to adapt to such change. Hence the emphasis in the GAB is on the opportunity to learn during the test session. The majority of applicants tested had no more than two years of formal schooling. In general, acceptable criterion-related validity has been reported. Kendal (1976) reported impressive correlations between both the GAB and its successor, the Classification Test Battery (CTB), and a carefully constructed composite criterion of practical and theoretical post-training results – 0,50 and 0,65 respectively.

Biesheuvel (1943) urged that investigators take a closer look at the influence on African intellegence of factors such as culture, the home environment, formal education and nutrition. Numerous researchers have investigated the influence of these factors on achievement in ability tests; for example, Mauer (1974) investigated the role of education, age and tribal grouping on the performance of black mineworkers on the CTB. He found the main effect of tribal grouping to be significant but far smaller than the main effects of education and age. In the studies of Grant (1969) and Kendal (1971) clear increases in the level of test performance were observed as a function of increased acculturation. In their review of the test performance of Southern African blacks, Kendal *et al.* (1988) conclude that the variables of formal education and urbanization exert a particularly strong and seemingly independent influence on those abilities that had been measured by psychologists – an influence which would appear to override ethnicity as a factor. That is hardly surprising as urbanization and education represent two of the most powerful agents of

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acculturation towards a modern, competitive and achievement-oriented way of life.

In the years preceding 1960 the New South African Group Test (NSAGT) was developed for whites. This test was intended to measure intelligence. Incidentally, in the earlier stages of test development this test was developed in English, Afrikaans and German, but it was released in English and Afrikaans only. At first separate verbal parts were constructed for the two language groups as items did not show the same relative difficulty for the groups and because the mean score on the same verbal items was much higher for the English-speaking group (Langenhoven, 1960). Langenhoven (1960) found a multiple correlation of 0,57 between environmental factors and IQ for the Afrikaans sample. Separate sets of norms were not at that stage politically acceptable, partly because both groups attended schools administered by the same education department, and when the test was released in 1965 only a common set of norms was provided. The extent and nature of the differences between the test scores of Afrikaans speakers and English speakers is discussed by Verster and Prinsloo (1988). They note a gradual convergence between the means of Afrikaans speakers and English speakers over successive cohorts spanning four or five generations. Although only imperfectly indicated, this corresponds well with the more general process of cultural convergence between the populations.

The general pattern for tests developed for schools at IPER between 1965 and 1982 was to develop separate tests for children in the various education departments. There were intelligence tests, differential aptitude test batteries, interest questionnaires and personality questionnaires. In a few instances the same test with different norms was used for different population groups. Examples of the latter would be the Aptitude Test for School Beginners, the 19 Field Interest Inventory and the High School Personality Questionnaire. The tests developed at NIPR were often intended to predict work performance of some kind. In other cases they were intended to

measure one of the primary abilities of Thurstone. Other tests include a test of personality for whites (the South African Personality Questionnaire), and a test of management style (the Belbin questionnaire). Norm populations were work applicants at certain firms. In some cases norms were given for whites, in some for black and in some for mixed norm populations. A complete overview of the tests and the populations for which they were intended can be found in the *Handbook for the use of Psychological and Scholastic Tests of IPER and NIPR* (Owen & Taljaard, 1989).

Investigations into test bias

As job reservation was removed and the South African workforce became more integrated industry demanded tests that would be fair to everyone, irrespective of race or culture. In education some mixed schools were started, to be followed by various school models where many schools would be open to anyone. There was also a demand by representatives from various education departments that the tests provided to them should not be constructed along racial lines and the norms should not be racially based. These demands forced test developers to try to develop tests with cross-cultural validity. A first step was to investigate the degree of bias present in existing tests.

A study was done to investigate the functioning of the NSAGT for the major population groups (Claassen, 1983). Groups were classified as low or high socio-economic status (SES). Group means of low and high SES groups differed by about one standard deviation. Considerable Differential Item Functioning (DIF) was detected for verbal items, but it was also shown that mean differences could be shrunk by eliminating the items indicated as biased. Factor structures were not invariant, but similarity of factor structures was demonstrated for groups of similar socio-economic status. Regression lines for the prediction of language and mathematics achievement differed for low and high SES groups in such a way that the prediction of the academic achievement of the low SES group was slightly but

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significantly underestimated when the regression function of the high SES group was used for them. This should be seen in relation to the overestimation of achievement reported by Reschly and Sabers (1979), Temp (1971) and Jensen (1980) for low SES groups in the USA. This means that low SES pupils can actually be expected to perform better than high SES pupils with the same NSAGT scores. What holds true for a developed country like the United States does not necessary hold true for a country where the majority of the people are somewhere on the continuum of acculturation towards a Western technological society. Claassen concluded that it might be possible to construct a common test for English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking children, but that the language deficiencies of most blacks could prove a serious obstacle.

Owen (1989a) studied the functioning of the Junior Aptitude Test (JAT) with white, Indian and black children. The group comprised about 1 000 Standard 7 pupils each. Fairly stable parameters were obtained. He found that the JAT "to a large extent measured the same constructs among the white, Indian and black pupils in the sample (Owen, 1989a:38)". Blacks scored almost two standard deviations below whites on most of the tests. Owen considered this a serious impediment to the construction of a single test to serve all these population groups. Ways by which this gap could be narrowed were therefore investigated and recommendations made. He reported on the differential functioning of the test for these groups and also investigated the reasons for differential performance (Owen, 1989a; 1989b). The findings as well as the ensuing recommendations regarding the construction of a common test are summarized in Owen, 1992.

According to Owen (1992) language is indispensable to the measurement of the full spectrum of intellectual abilities required in a technological society. In a multilingual country the test compiler will probably always come up against test bias caused by language

deficiencies. According to Owen, the following are among the kinds of item content that should be avoided:

- Negatively formulated item stems and answer options
- Items requiring the selection of one untrue answer
- Item distracters that are overly attractive and therefore confusing to less sophisticated testees
- Complicated syntax in mathematical story problems
- The use of items involving direction and directional orientation
- Using verbal analogies when figure analogies could be used
- Difficult words in items such as classification and analogies
- Abstract item types such as syllogisms

Like other investigators Owen points out that "the differences in mean test scores which are usually found between white and black testees in South Africa, are probably largely a reflection of the enormous differences in socio-economic conditions and educational opportunities which have existed, and still exist, between these groups" (1992:62). Tests should not be condemned for highlighting important consequences of these differences, but policy makers should rather be informed by them. These findings point to the importance of social upliftment schemes and the need for education of a certain kind.

The South African Personality Questionnaire (SAPQ) consists of five scales. It was developed for whites but is increasingly applied to blacks and other groups. Taylor and Boeyens (1990) compared black and white responses to the SAPQ. Differences between means, factor structures and DIF were investigated. They found reasonable support for the construct comparability of the Dominance and the Social Responsiveness scales. The weakest scales from the point of view of construct comparability were the Rigidity and Anxiety scales. The percentage of items having a shortcoming, due either to incomparability or low item-total correlation, varied from 31% for Dominance to 86% for Rigidity. Despite the questionable construct validity of some SAPQ scales and the high incidence of poor items in the black data, the authors maintain that the results are not so negative as to

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render impossible the prospect of developing an objectively scorable instrument that would work in all cultural groups in South Africa.

Four tests of the NIPR were investigated for bias by Holburn (1992). They were the Intermediate Mental Alertness, Mechanical Comprehension, Blox and High Level Figure Classification tests. Her groups were unfortunately rather small, so she advised that the findings be seen as tentative. The sizes of the samples were not even half that recommended by Zieky (1993). All that can really be said is that indications of bias were found and that the implications of test scores may not be the same for blacks, whites, Indians and coloureds. The High Level Figure Classification Test appeared to be the most suitable for cross-cultural use.

Taylor (1987) gave his vision for the future of cognitive testing. He refers back to the work of Ferguson (1954) who stated that cultural factors determine what shall be learned and at what stage. The South African society has been described as a society in transition (Miller, 1987) and a large proportion of citizens are somewhere on a continuum spanning traditional culture and a Western technological society. Traditional tests assume a large degree of cultural homogeneity. In First World populations most abilities are likely to have reached their asymptote by early adulthood and traits are likely to have stabilized by this stage. Also, a fair degree of consistency may be assumed for the rate of development of abilities. In a society with sections at various stages of acculturation these assumptions are not met. Less advantaged groups, in particular, are likely to contain members who are still on the steep part of the curve, owing to poor education and lack of opportunity. In addition the strategies and styles used to perform a given task tend to be more uniform across the population than is the case in a heterogeneous society. Taylor also argued for the probable utility of the concept of learning potential or modifiability when optimal development for all is the aim in a multicultural society. These and other related factors led Taylor to propose a new generation of measures in which the genres of

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psychometric testing and information processing are to be integrated and where the results obtained should also inform educators about how to educate each individual in an optimal way.

As yet the measures envisaged by Taylor are still to be developed. An exception is a test of learning potential developed by Taylor himself and in experimental use. The tests applied by the University of Cape Town to assess academic potential of potential students are also an important development. Tests of English (comprehension) and mathematics (a field probably equally unknown to all applicants) are given to students. They study the comprehension tests and answer challenging questions. They also have to master the mathematics and apply their insights appropriately. Very good success rates are reported for selecting on these tests. How the tests are scored and pupil potential is calculated is veiled in obscurity. This makes it difficult to discern how the good selection outcomes tie in with the body of knowledge on abilities and selection.

Dorans and Holland (1993) draw attention to the fundamental problem of the definition of the groups of interest when bias in test scores is investigated. They comment on the glib way the issue had been handled in the USA by simply making use of easily defined groups such as Asians, blacks and women. Already in 1977 Novick and Ellis had made a strong case for "the explicit identification of those attributes that constitute disadvantage, rather than accepting group membership as a surrogate for disadvantage" (1977:318). Dorans and Holland feel that significant advances in the implementation of techniques to determine Differential Item Functioning (DIFF) may depend on serious efforts to address this issue.

Tests for more than one cultural group

Strictly speaking the NSAGT that was released in 1965 can be seen as a test for more than one cultural group. That was the position taken by Langenhoven (1960). The same would then hold for all the other

tests developed for whites. In all cases Afrikaans and English versions of the tests were made available. Here we will regard only tests developed and made available for more than one of the erstwhile racial groupings as tests for more than one cultural group.

The School-Readiness Evaluation by Trained Teachers (SETT) was developed to assist teachers in all education departments to determine whether a child has reached levels of language and intellectual development, emotional-social development and physical-motor development that will enable the child to benefit from formal teaching in his or her first school year (Joubert, 1984). The same criteria were set for children from all population groups as they all have to master the same work in their first school year. Acceptable validity for the screening model is reported.

The General Scholastic Aptitude Test (GSAT) was developed for Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking children (Claassen, 1987). The test was to replace the group intelligence tests available for coloureds, Indians and whites. Items for the verbal subtests were written in English and Afrikaans simultaneously. DIF techniques were used to flag items that might be biased against one or more population group or against low SES children. The most biased items were removed from the pool irrespective of the population group favoured. Experts in the population groups concerned were also asked to screen items for possible bias. Items in the final test were selected to span a wide range of item difficulty in order to serve the whole population. Testing times were determined so that ample time would be allowed even for very slow workers. The test was normalized on a stratified random sample of Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking children.

In spite of all the attempts to eliminate biased items the correlation between total score and SES was still 0,58, which was reflected in a marked difference between the mean scores of population groups. The factor structures of the lower scoring groups also differed from those of the higher scoring groups (Claassen, 1990). Implications of GSAT

scores for school work were to a large extent the same for the lower scoring and the higher scoring groups.

Even though precautions were taken to eliminate biased items, it is still clear that the content of many of the items is related to the general cultural elements of a modern society. The aim of an intelligence test is to determine the ability to educe relations and correlates, rather than to measure the testee's knowledge of some content. It is argued by Claassen *et al.* (1991) that in a test which measures intelligence it is assumed that all the testees are equally familiar with the content involved. The economically disadvantaged person is as a rule also culturally disadvantaged and lacks some of the knowledge required. For this reason they suggested that GSAT scores can give an indication of the intelligence of non-environmentally disadvantaged pupils only. GSAT scores do, however, give a good indication of all pupils' problem-solving abilities in a scholastic context. Meyer (1991) found that the same regression lines could be used for high SES and low SES groups when predicting scholastic achievement. In the context of the model for generalization proposed by Poortinga (1989) the domain of intelligence is not identical for the high SES and the low SES testees and cannot be sampled with the same set of items. Even for the high SES group it still remains a high inference variable. The domain of scholastic aptitude is probably fairly well sampled by these items for both the groups. This is a medium inference variable as some of the abilities crucial to benefiting from normal classroom instruction are assessed and measures of criterion validity are readily available. Norms are available for non-environmentally disadvantaged children, for environmentally disadvantaged children and for all children.

The Senior South African Individual Scale – Revised (SSAIS-R) is an individual intelligence scale developed for all Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking South Africans (Van Eeden, 1991). It was developed in much the same way as the GSAT. IQ norms are available for both non-environmentally disadvantaged children and for all children. According to the Poortinga model the use of the IQ norm table for all

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children would assume that the domain of intelligence is regarded as identical for the low SES and the high SES groups. The Individual Scale for General Scholastic Aptitude was also developed for all Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking South Africans (Robinson, 1994). The test was modelled after the Binet tests, and development was done along lines similar to the previous two tests mentioned. The test can give a good indication of scholastic aptitude in less than 45 minutes.

The 16 PF of Cattell was adapted and standardized for all South Africans 18 years and older, from any language group, who have the necessary command of English and Afrikaans, and who have reached a formal education level of at least Standard 10 (Prinsloo, 1992). This version of the test is known as the SA92. In the manual it is reported that the test functions similarly for the various population groups. Details of analyses are not given. By the setting of certain minimum standards, the population for which the test is applicable has become much more homogeneous than the South African population in general. The E-form is shorter, uses simpler language and is available for people who have a minimum academic qualification of Std 6.

The HSRC has also published a number of questionnaires that are suitable for all high school students, even those whose mother tongue is neither Afrikaans nor English. They should, however, be able to understand one of these languages well. They are the Life Role Inventory, the South African Vocational Interest Inventory, the Values Scale and the Career Development Questionnaire. In all these, all population groups were included in test development right through. The exact implications of cultural and SES differences are in need of research.

Conclusion

South Africa is not simply a multicultural society. It is a multicultural society in which acculturation of many kinds is taking place and in which a new nationhood is actively encouraged. The cultural

distances between cultures and subcultures vary and the cultural distances are not the same for various facets of behaviour. The meanings of behaviour differ and the values attached to certain kinds of behaviour differ.

How can measurement contribute to understanding in this context? The answer of Berry would probably be: By ensuring that the measurement is nested in the behavioural and ecocultural context. This position makes life really difficult for the test developer and the test user. A test score can never be interpreted without taking note of and understanding the context in which the score was obtained. In a homogeneous society there is a much smaller chance of large and significant differences in the behavioural and ecocultural contexts in which the individual functions and a test score could easily develop a fairly unambiguous meaning. Test scores may then offer a short cut to important knowledge and understanding of a person.

Is it meaningful to test in a culturally complex society such as South Africa? Is the only meaningful way of obtaining knowledge not the way of the anthropologist – participant observation or direct observation in the natural context? Direct observation will probably lead to important insights. Some of these insights could be obtained in a non-threatening interview where the interviewer or counsellor is really open to the world of the interviewee. Open communication in an atmosphere of trust could enable all parties to understand the life-world of the other. This could be understood as some kind of informal measurement already. A person who is knowledgeable about the strengths and limitations of tests may in many cases be able to contribute good quality information to the issues at hand by applying tests judiciously and interpreting results in context.

It will be a serious mistake to accept without adequate proof that tests developed for various cultural groups do in fact measure the same constructs for all the cultural groups included in test development. What is urgently needed is adequate proof of the

generalizability of the constructs supposedly measured to all cultural groups in samples other than those on which the test was developed. As demonstrated by Taylor and Boeyens (1990), it may be that only some scales cannot be readily transported to another culture. In the development of a common test, members of all the cultures concerned should be actively contributing at all stages of test development. When important human attributes manifest in unique clusters of behaviour in a particular culture it is not meaningful to force such questions into a common scale for many cultural groups.

Human culture permeates nearly all environmental contacts. Since all behaviour is thus affected by the cultural milieu in which the individual is reared and since measurements of the kind used in the human sciences are but samples of behaviour cultural influences will and should be reflected in test performance. It is therefore futile to try to devise a test that is free from cultural influences (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). A realistic objective in cross-cultural testing is rather to construct tests that presuppose only experiences that are common to different cultures. It is unlikely, moreover, that any one test can be equally "fair" to more than one cultural group, especially if the cultures are quite dissimilar. When the cultural distance between groups is small, however, this goal could be approached.

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12

Action research and participatory research in South Africa

Melanie Walker

Introduction

In this chapter I shall discuss common features of participatory forms of research rather than neatly separating out action research and participatory research. At the same time, the particularity of educational action research will be explored in rather more detail. Other forms of participatory research will be noted by briefly highlighting the methodology of a recent case study (Levin, 1994).

What constitutes action research and participatory research is not uncontested in so far as neither has some essential emancipatory effect or claim to "truth" outside of the discourses within which they are situated (see Gore, 1993). All practices and theories need to be continually open to question, rather than pushing for closure, not least around what a complex term like "emancipation" means at different times and in different contexts, and given new post-modernist readings of the non-unitary self.

The point to be underscored is that the language of action research and participatory research is no less easily domesticated or

"recuperated" (McWilliam, 1994), nor any less limited or contradictory because it is grounded in advocacy concerns for research as/for social change. Participatory forms of enquiry may easily slip into political activism and univerzalising claims, or quite limited technical approaches to change in which method triumphs over methodology (see McTaggart, 1994).

Like the educational process, action and participatory research should be seen as always provisional, partial and experimental.

Advocacy

Nonetheless, it is also fair to say that such research in South Africa has been grounded in what might be termed "passionate scholarship", that is, a concern for both research and a political commitment to social justice and forms of democratic participation in social life (see for example, Davidoff *et al.*, 1993; Levin, 1994; Walters, 1983). In South Africa, then, action research has been grounded in what Noffke and Stevenson (1995) describe as "becoming practically critical" – a commitment to better understandings of social action which support democratic education in schools and elsewhere.

Both participatory and action research incorporate social action and change *as part of the research process* itself. The concept of praxis is thus central, that is, the dialectic of theory and practice, action and research, education and research. Research involves practical action, as well as the more traditional function of knowledge produced by outsider researchers, and the inclusion not exclusion of a practical ethics (Lomax, 1994). Lomax (1994) distinguishes between *research on education* and *educational research* where the latter has an inbuilt requirement for educational development as an imperative of the research process.

Interestingly, unlike Britain or Australia, the development of a community or communities of action researchers has not been grounded in favourable political or curriculum conditions (see for

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example, Elliott, 1991). Indeed, until very recently, action research was conducted in educational conditions and even research conditions (see Appel, 1991 and Wolpe, 1991) by and large hostile to such micro-studies of classroom practice. Thus, while some commentators now suggest (Rob Walker and Stephen Rowland, personal communication) that action research has failed in its advocacy claims in conditions where it was previously able to flourish, action research in South Africa now faces a less oppositional policy climate. Yet it may equally lose sight of its earlier progressive democratic concerns and of a fundamental thrust to critique relations of power embedded in educational action under these more favourable educational conditions. In this respect, it should prove interesting to track future developments in action research in South Africa.

At any rate, case studies of action research (see for example Adendorff 1993; Davidoff *et al.*, 1993; and Walker, 1991) and participatory research (for example, Levin, 1994) acknowledge the limits of any research enterprise divorced from collective political action grounded in democratic organizations. Levin (1994:54) therefore concludes that:

> Participatory research is one component of a participatory strategy which in order to be genuine and popular requires systematic political organization. On its own and in isolation, participatory research runs *the risk of raising expectations which a research project on its own cannot satisfy.*

Similarly I have argued elsewhere (Walker, 1995) that, while we might begin with individual teachers in individual classrooms, we cannot end there but must needs link our emancipatory intentions to collective political action (see also Van Louw, 1993).

Both forms of research are forms of insider researcher, although this is more marked in the case of action research in that the practitioner is also the researcher, and the practitioner's own professional work is the focus of the research project. In both forms, research problems and

questions arise out of insider concerns rather than outsider agendas (however well meaning). Ideally, participants in the research are subjects rather than objects, involved at best in research design, data collection, analysis and reporting. In practice, complicated contextual conditions may well make such an ideal difficult to realize fully. Nonetheless, participation is still a value to be clarified through practising research. Such processes are *reflexive* rather than only reflective in that the researcher's own actions are always subject to critical scrutiny.

In a recent example of participatory research, Levin (1994) articulates the researchers' concern for the development of participatory policy-making processes in which a local community defined and prioritized their own social transformation needs. Levin distinguishes between participation only as legitimation, and popular participation as knowledge production and policy formulation through a "genuine" participatory research methodology in which the researchers must come to understand the community's reality.

Similarly, action research seeks to change and study discourse, practice and social organization, that is, the *distribution of power* in educational settings (McTaggart, 1991). Thus action research is more than "method" in its aspiration to realize "worthwhile" educational values in practice (Elliott, 1991) and build a culture of enquiry. Not surprisingly, the most widely cited definition in South African projects (see Davidoff, *et al.*, 1993) is that of emancipatory action research explicated by Carr and Kemmis (1986:162):

> Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understandings of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

As Noffke (1995:5) explains, this requires working not for sedimented, decontextualized solutions to educational problems but:

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a continuous process of clarification of our vision in the area of social justice, of recognizing the constraints on practice, and of developing capabilities necessary to realize those visions, while at the same time holding all three as problematic.

Such research clearly challenges the idea of objective, value-free research and the neutral role of the (outsider) researcher. Rather, the insider-researcher's assumptions and values shape the enquiry and become part of the argument – there can be no disinterested research. In this, subjectivity needs to seen as a strength rather than a weakness in the research design and process. As Schratz and Walker (1995:60) write:

> Social science has only recently come to realise that subjectivity, rather than threatening claims to scientific status, actually marks claims to disciplinary uniqueness. The task of social research has to involve both the exploration of the subjective nature of knowing and the mapping of the world as it is experienced by others.

Yet this does not mean that research is therapy. What is at stake, they say is the complex interrelationship of the personal/individual with the social, and ways of "thinking about subjectivity as it is expressed in specific social contexts, involving ways of thinking about the self, and changing the self, that are socially rather than individualistically located" (Schratz & Walker, 1995:61).

Both forms of research value subjective accounts, disciplined by the research process, and underpinned by a view of active and transformative knowing in which knowledge and meaning are constructed through interaction on/in the world, here explicated by Freire, (quoted in McTaggart, (1989:6):

> It demands a constant searching. It implies invention and re-invention ... in the learning process the only person who really learns is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends

and thereby reinvents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriated learning to concrete existential situations.

Methods

This is not to say that action research and participatory research are quite unlike more traditional research. Quite the contrary. In both forms, data are systematically collected and analysed, the research design is flexible and may shift in the light of events, and written accounts are a key (but not the only) means of disseminating new knowledge. However, analysis and reflection on data help to shape further action and decisions.

Action research, for example, turns on the concept of a cycle of steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting on changes effected by the action (Lewin 1946; for a history of action research see Noffke, 1994)). Each cycle spirals into further cycles of action in which, at each twist of the spiral, the view is both the same and different. In practice, one problem will spin off into linked spirals, and smaller cycles will be nested within the larger framing problem. Importantly, recurring reflection leads one to modify the action throughout the research study in a recursive rather than a linear research pattern.

Action research's diagrammatic schemes lack inherent explanatory power, and there is no problematization of the critique leading to self-renewal in Lewin's spiral. Winter (1987:43) points out that this spiral remains untheorized and undialectical in that "the possibility for an increase in understanding is silently inscribed in the space between observation and reflection, between the investigator and the investigated". Here we must ask: in what ways is our awareness socially, institutionally and biographically constructed? Are self-understandings alone the source of critical reflection? How, as Britzman (1991) says, do we recognise and name empirical observations which escape or exceed our existing frameworks?

How, then, to move from a view to a review, from self-reproduction to critical self-transcendence? For example, Kelly (1985) notes of her own involvement in the Girls into Science and Technology (GIST) project that it is all very well to talk of making one's taken-for-granted reality strange, but without an "Other" view (however understood) this might not happen, precisely because the familiar is taken for granted. She uses the example of sexism in classrooms which might not seem strange to teachers who have not questioned the patriarchal basis of society. Because schooling and its effects appear "natural", it is not available to be questioned. The point is that our understanding of social action is always "partially correct and partially in need of revision" (Noffke, 1994:5), and this would hold as much for politically driven participatory research as for educationally inspired action research. How insight occurs, then, remains an unanswered question in the absence of a dialectic of theory and practice, of action and reflection, and subject and context.

Winter (1987) offers a way forward: he offers theorizing, grounded in critical social science theory, as a means to shape critical reflection – "it requires the possibility of a potential theoretic competence among social actors" (1987:5). His explanation runs as follows: research/theory disrupts the taken-for-granted of action. Action is enmeshed (however loosely) in a social system, whereas research/theory is the process whereby the self-perpetuating processes of that system might be interrupted. This does not mean that theory prescribes action, rather that there is continuous and unending relationship between theorist and social action – between self and self as Other. Theory makes available the principles for alternative methodologies:

> The development of theory has always been necessary as a guide to research, a lens through which one interprets, that sets things apart and pulls things together. But theory is essential for practical implementation as well. (Brown, 1994:8)

Reflexive action research (and participatory research) would offer not theory alone, but a <u>dialectic of theory and action</u>. Theory building would be different from grounded theory on the one hand, and impose theoretical formulations on the other, turning on a dialectical interplay in which theory illuminates practice and is illuminated by action in turn. To make this move we need to conceptualize critical reflection as neither wholly determined by the social domain nor grounded in the humanist assumption of human freedom and the individual's spontaneous capacity for self-transcendence.

Thus theory-based action research (but understanding also that theory and theorizing is not only what is written down) takes us beyond common sense, interrogates experience rather than merely romanticizing it, pushing against the grain of our familiar discourses and moving us from individual awareness to "analytic coherence" (Rudduck, 1994) so that we develop practices which have more self-conscious social and political objectives. "It means", says Rudduck (1994:122), "looking beyond the short-term successes and under-standing the tight weave of structures that hold inequality in place".

Collaboration, power and ethics

Both forms of research aspire to be collaborative and collective, although this in turn throws up a number of concerns around group differences, not least in levels of research expertise (say, between a university facilitator and teachers). Empowering or dialogic research designs do not resolve asymmetrical relationships in the production of a research account (see Ganie and Prinsloo, 1993). The common justification that "they got something out of it too", says Patai (1991), even if accurate, still does not challenge the inequalities on which the entire process rests. Neither does an "empowering" stance of mutual learning and genuine dialogue:

> For we continue to function in an overdetermined universe in which our respective roles ensure that other people are always

the subject of our research, almost never the reverse. (Patai, 1991:149).

On a similar note, Ellsworth (1989:312) emphasizes that "all voices ... are not carrying and cannot carry equal legitimacy, safety and power" under present structural conditions. Thus, suggests Patai (1991:308), we need to move from a dialogical community to a "sustained encounter with currently oppressive formations and power relations", including owning up to one's own place in these formations, and even to the painful possibility that it may not be possible to write about the oppressed without becoming the oppressor. Her point is that "in an unethical world, we cannot do truly ethical research" (1991:150) for this, in the end, requires political action, as Levin (1994) and others have also argued.

All this involves making problematic an uncritical and romantic notion of "voice" and the easy erasure of professional and intellectual boundaries. Rather, collaboration may turn on crossing and transgressing boundaries (between school and university, teacher and academic, community and researcher); alliances across difference more than patronizing restriction of what we say, disguised as "respect" (see Somekh, 1994).

Yet, faced with the strenuous road of analytic awareness and professional competence, danger lurks in what Muller and Taylor (1995) describe as "hybridising" and what I would say involves "flattening" action research in our commitment to a democratic research method, and so neutralizing its emancipatory potential when faced with research as a complicated not simple endeavour. How then do we address the boundaries between reflection and research, between who can and who cannot be said to be a researcher, and what does and ought to count as research?

Stenhouse (1981:9) defines research as "systematic enquiry made public"; Stuart (1991:149) distinguishes between "reflection in action" and "action research":

Through action research teachers are helped to make the process [reflection in action] more conscious, more explicit, and more rigorous to the point where, if made available for public critique and discussion, it can be called research.

Essentially the former would involve individual professional development, the latter a contribution to public knowledge.

Yet mine and others' experience suggests that it is not so simple to cross the line from a discourse of reflection and reflective practice to one of research and research practice. Moreover, research criteria and standards in the academy have been constructed historically, and these rules mirror the relative positions of particular groups in society. Teachers, as we know, are positioned as knowledge *reproducers* in relation to academics, the knowledge producers; and everyday knowledge in local communities is less highly regarded than university knowledge. Thus, argue Muller and Taylor (1995:11), the "boundary bashers" (who, for example, would describe professional development as research) "unwittingly connive at their own marginalization" (1995:11) by those who have the power (the academy in relation to teachers; or traditional educational research in relation to action research) to classify where the line should be drawn. Rather, they suggest, the issue is one of enabling "prudent boundary crossing" of the space between exclusive domains of discursive activity (action and research?). They offer a caveat: "This is not to say that we accept the line as legitimate, merely that the battle cannot be won by trying to erase it discursively." The correct strategy, they suggest, is equipping people with the social and cultural "papers" needed to cross the border safely.

Thus, academic knowledge is different from everyday knowledge, and this would include academic knowledge about educational theory and practices, and academic knowledge about research production, compared to the folk wisdom of teaching (the "everybody knows how to teach because we have all been to school" argument). The issue here

is what kind of disabling rather than empowering effects might advocacy work have which "crosses the line by acting as though the border were not there" (Muller and Taylor, 1995:12)? As I understand this argument, the issue is to take care in what we describe as research. If we choose to label limited classroom enquiries or reflective teaching in this way for strategic reasons (for example, in order to reconstruct perceptions of the intellectual role of teachers) then both teacher educators and teachers need to be conscious of what is at stake, what is being described, and how this "research" is different from (but not lesser than?) esoteric forms.

But this should also not mean sidestepping a challenge to the academy's rules as to what counts as research, or noting that even when we have the "correct documents" we may still be excluded from crossing on the basis of gender (or race, or class).

The "line" is, at the end of the day, itself constructed and serves particular interests so that the issue becomes not one of the erasure of the borders but a suggestion that more traditional research forms and their practitioners demonstrate greater reflexivity regarding their own (constructed) positions and location in academic relations of power, when they act as "gatekeepers" to exclude immigrant partners and marginalize new educational forms of research/development.

Validity

Finally, a turn to the question of validity. One of the usual ways in which action research data can be validated is by the technique of triangulation – multiple data sources, for example the teacher's view of the lesson, pupils' views, and a participant-observer perspective. Silverman (1985), however, argues that this view of triangulation as the comparison of accounts to eliminate bias or subjectivity has strong positivist overtones in that it assumes a single reality and treats accounts unproblematically as multiple mappings of this reality – more data reinforces a "truth" claim. This does not mean not generating data

in multiple ways. Rather, says Silverman, the mistake would be to use data to adjudicate between accounts without taking into account the context in which data has been generated: "What goes on in one setting is not a simple corrective to what happens elsewhere – each must be understood in its own terms" (Silverman, 1985:21).

The point here is that data gathered in different settings cannot simply be added for a more complete picture, and research accounts always remain partial and incomplete. It would be a mistake to imagine that by layering all these views (self, peers, learners) on one another we arrive at a complete or true account of events, or that readers will make of our accounts the same meaning as we the researchers. What we have is still an interpretation where the personal perspectives of multiple informants (teachers, school principals, colleagues) have been shaped in turn by historical and social contexts.

Lather (1991) alerts us, moreover, to remembering that our commitment to emancipatory knowledge and an acknowledgement of our own assumptions, might run the risk of rampant subjectivity. But the task then is to make our interpretations empirically accountable, while also searching for workable ways of establishing the trustworthiness of our data. Our empirical evidence should anchor our theoretical formulations so that our validation procedures aspire to "critical intersubjectivity", that is, a subjectivity "sufficiently controlled to allow critical scrutiny" (Stenhouse, 1978:33).

The point to emphasize yet again is the reflexivity of the researcher, so that validity and reliability are not so much about "truth" or "falsity" as about shifting the emphasis to the contexts in which meanings are produced and the multiple and contradictory possible readings not only of these contexts but of the research report itself. Delamont (1992:9) sums it up:

> Each researcher is her own best data collection instrument, as long as she is constantly self-conscious about her role, her interactions, and her theoretical and empirical material as it

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accumulates. As long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served.

This means a shift to a discursively reflexive position "in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault, quoted in Lather, 1991:38).

I want, then, to end but not close, ask but not answer Noffke's (1991:55) central question for action and participatory research projects inside or outside the academy: "What ought research to look like if its purposes and forms are to be truly educational?"

In the end, any research form laying claim to an advocacy role must then ask: Who in the end benefits from our research? Whose problems do we try to understand? Who speaks to and for whom? Who writes and who is written?

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13

Programme evaluation: a structured assessment

Johann Louw

Background

Modern social programme evaluation has its origins mainly in the United States of America in the years following World War Two. Social programmes were launched in the 1960s by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in education, income maintenance, housing, health and criminal justice (collectively called the Great Society programmes), to protect Americans against the negative effects of poverty. The massive financial expenditure this entailed quickly led to what is considered today as major evaluation concerns:

- Were the programme funds being spent as intended?
- Were local projects implemented as intended by the federal legislature?
- Did the programmes achieve desirable results, and to what extent?
- Were these investments cost-effective and cost-beneficial?

In a very real sense one could say that South Africa at present finds itself in a similar situation to that of the USA after World War Two. At government level, various attempts are being made to formulate policies which could address the negative effects of poverty: in the provision of housing, supply of electricity, education and health services. If the American pattern is repeated, this could lead to an

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increasing demand for evaluation services. South Africa, however, also has an extensive and lively non-governmental sector (the NGOs), which adds to the concern about questions of financial accountability, programme effectiveness, efficiency of delivery, etc. Numerous programmes and projects have been developed by these NGOs to address the inequalities of health care and education. It is to be expected that such programmes and projects will in future be guided increasingly by overall policy, to co-ordinate and integrate their activities. The question is whether these efforts will be accompanied by an emphasis on evaluation.

Some clarification follows of what is understood in this chapter by the terms "programme" and "project". Policies are normally embodied as programmes. For some authors "social programmes" are large-scale, heterogeneous entities, which include various local projects and where service provision actually takes place. These projects then consist of various service and management elements such as workshops, medical check-ups, record keeping and service co-ordination. For others, "programmes" should be interpreted more liberally, and the term should not be restricted to large scale social programmes. In South Africa, very little evaluation of these large-scale, centrally co-ordinated multi-site "programmes" has been done. In this chapter I follow the latter strategy, but try to consider social programmes rather than evaluations of specific interventions. However, even this guideline is not rigorously adhered to, with the result that the definition of what constitutes a "programme" for this report is rather vague and changeable. The next step in assessing the field of programme evaluation in South Africa would have to give more serious consideration of this.

Characteristics of the field in SA

The overall impression one has is that of diffusion and fragmentation of the field in South Africa. This is not unique to this country. Programme evaluation by its very nature is very diverse: in

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its methods; in the academic or professional specialities involved in it; in its sites of practice; in the institutional affiliation of its practitioners. In the USA, for example, psychologists and educators gravitate toward the American Evaluation Association; economists and political scientists toward the American Association of Public Policy and Management; and health researchers toward associations in health education, epidemiology or public health.

Although the South African scene does not have these kinds of bodies in evaluation, the main activities appear to centre on the same areas as well. Thus if one asks: "Where does evaluation take place?", the answer "In education, public health, epidemiology, and health education" would cover a lot of activities in the local situation. It can be safely assumed that project evaluation also occurs in industry (see: Birkenbach, *et al.* 1985; Blignault, 1993; Oosthuizen, 1993; Van Zyl, 1988), but reports emanating from such studies are often difficult to find. Also, they are seldom *social* programmes.

Diversity is both a strength and a weakness. The major weakness is exactly in the fragmentation that it involves, since it is very difficult for the field to increase its "level of service" in such a state. Without some coherence and communication in the field, little interchange of ideas between people who do similar work is possible. The way researchers and practitioners then work in relative isolation can only be detrimental to both evaluation research and practice — hence the reference above to level of service.

The difficulties implied by fragmentation are exacerbated in South Africa by the fact that programme evaluation at present attracts a relatively small number of practitioners and researchers. Very few are independent practitioners/consultants with evaluation as full-time or major-time activity, and there are even fewer contract research firms. The majority therefore are not in evaluation full-time. They are typically in university departments of education, sociology and psychology; in health and educational policy units, also attached to

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universities; and in research bodies, such as the Human Sciences Research Council and the Medical Research Council.

Generally speaking the field is therefore much less developed locally than in countries with a longer tradition of programme evaluation. The considerations mentioned above, however, lead me to predict that it is going to occupy a more central place in our society as a social science-in-practice. There are signs that the importance of evaluation is increasingly recognized in government departments: for example, in the Auditor-General's Office. Another example: Parry (1994) found that key informants in the health policy domain identified the need to evaluate existing mental health services as a top priority. The awareness of the need to evaluate is also particularly strong in the various NGOs, whose continued funding is often dependent upon some form of evaluation of their activities. The publicity recently given to instances of financial mismanagement in this sector has strengthened the demand for financial accountability, and as indicated in the first paragraph of the report, this easily leads to more general evaluation questions.

Opportunities to receive formal training in evaluation methodology, such as degree conferring programmes, are almost non-existent. I am able to give four examples of programme evaluation elements in master's courses: under Dr Ray Basson of the Department of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, master's students in education do one such course; at the Department of Psychology of the University of the Western Cape, Dr Rumilla Naran taught a one-year master's course on evaluation (it is unclear whether this course is still being taught); and I teach an introductory course in programme evaluation to master's students in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town and the Department of Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch. Outside the universities, the Forum for the Advancement of Adult Education has also taught a number of introductory courses in programme evaluation and has prepared a training booklet on the topic. In fact, attempts have been made to use

these training workshops and seminars to bring evaluators together, but these have been difficult to sustain. Mathews, Yach and Buch (1989) also have produced a booklet to assist in the training of evaluators in the primary health care domain.

As a result of this shortage in training courses, those currently in evaluation have either re-tooled their methodology training in their primary discipline (e.g. psychology) into evaluation methodology, or have received training overseas, typically in the USA.

Addressing limitations

These deficiencies have been recognized and attempts made to address them. For example, in 1990 the Human Sciences Research Council brought Mark Lipsey, then of Claremont Graduate School, to this country to assist in an evaluation of a second language teaching program, and to conduct program evaluation methodology seminars in the major centres. Lipsey returned to South Africa in July 1994 to continue these seminars. Carol Weiss of Harvard University is another prominent evaluator who was a recent visitor to South Africa.

In September 1993, a small number (35) of individuals involved in the field organized a two-day symposium in Cape Town. The major objective of the symposium was to bring together the disparate groups currently involved in programme evaluation. These groups included donor organizations, potential users of evaluation services, actual users, researchers, teachers of courses in programme evaluation and practitioners.

The Centre for Science Development of the Human Sciences Research Council provided partial funding, which made it possible to invite the then president of the American Evaluation Association, David Fetterman, to deliver the keynote address at the symposium, and to act as general consultant on the issues on the agenda. He also presented workshops on *Empowerment Evaluation* in Pretoria and *Qualitative Methods in Evaluation* in Cape Town and Durban.

It became clear that a surprising amount of work was being done in South Africa. However, the demand for evaluation still outstrips the supply of evaluation expertise. One consequence of this is that organizations quite often rely on foreign experts as consultants, who bring their ways of doing evaluation with them. Quite clearly, again, there is a need to make more training facilities available locally.

Another problem area identified was the lack of published information on the evaluations done or being done locally, and it was clear that the publication of local evaluations deserve attention in order to improve quality. Some references to published work are given in this report, but these are in no way exhaustive since the intention was not to produce a bibliography. One further small step in this regard is that a special edition of the journal *Evaluation and Program Planning* has recently been devoted to South African articles.

In more general and more ambitious terms, it was thought that the symposium ought to contribute to the development of a critical mass of serious thinkers and doers in the field of evaluation. The intention was for the group to become the base for "capacity building" with regard to programme evaluation skills in South Africa. The symposium was therefore regarded as a starting point in what will hopefully be a longer term process. Although the objectives for the two days were limited to the ones outlined above, it was recognized that much more is needed to begin laying a sound conceptual foundation which would permit programme evaluation to be rooted in several fields and create the interpersonal and inter-organizational linkages needed to provide the programmatic and financial commitments for nurturing the conceptual base.

With this in mind, an Evaluation Task Group was formed and given a fourfold brief: to promote and strengthen communication between those individuals and organizations interested in programme evaluation; to organise a more inclusive conference on programme evaluation in 1994; to prepare a motion to form a national evaluation

association to put it to the meeting; and to organize regional meetings around evaluation issues. Although regional meetings have taken place, arrangements for a national conference never came to fruition, and the idea was abandoned. Thus a national body of programme evaluators sounds too ambitious at this stage, and it might be that small local associations or networks are more feasible.

Methods

The following impressions emerged from my informal survey of the field.

1   The qualitative approach to evaluation of, for example, Guba and Lincoln (1989), is a popular one. Numerous examples can be found of evaluations conducted in this broad framework.

The evaluation of the Educational Development Programme at the University of Natal (Durban) attempted to describe systematically the value positions of the various stakeholders, in which the evaluator served as a facilitator of dialogue and negotiator of meaning. Unfortunately, in the time available I have been unable to obtain a copy of the reports emanating from this research. Discussions with interested parties, however, made it clear that this evaluation was a particularly difficult one, and that it might be a useful case study in terms of lessons learned from local evaluations.

Participative research in particular attracts a number of adherents, partly because it is perceived to contribute substantially to the utilization of evaluation findings by the beneficiaries of the interventions – in the public health domain, for example. Kelly and Van Vlaenderen (in press) have developed a method to evaluate the participation of communities in research projects, identifying four modes of participating and six key evaluation objectives.

2   The second impression is almost a consequence of the first. Given the state of evaluation and programme development in this country, most of the work involves formative rather than summative evaluation. The examples used above illustrate this point as well.

3   Experimental designs are difficult to find in outcome evaluations, but quasi-experimental designs are well represented. Oosthuizen (1993), for example, conducted an evaluation of an anti-racism (or stereotype reduction) programme in a Port Elizabeth manufacturing company. She utilized a Solomon four-group design, to control mainly for pre-test sensitization. This study is exemplary in a number of ways. For a start, it used a very explicit theoretical model as the basis for the programme's design, namely Tajfel's social identity theory. It took multiple operationism quite seriously: multiple data sources, methods and techniques were employed. Criteria for success of the programme were participants' reactions to the workshop, their learning and their positive behaviour changes. She also developed measuring instruments especially for the project: a questionnaire, a set of projective pictures, together with a standardized open-ended interview.

The Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) used a variant of an *ex post facto* design to plan an evaluation of Phase B of the Alexandra Housing Project. They documented the history of the project, and used multiple data sources to gather information about the following: management of the project; implementation of the contract; capacity of the Alexandra City Council; capacity of the beneficiaries, the Alexandra community; institutional arrangements; impact upon the community; and environmental impact.

In an unpublished document of the DBSA Singini and Vink described the design of an evaluation of the Farmer Support Programme. They envizaged that the project would be evaluated

by means of a pre-test post-test panel design, but it is unclear whether the project was actually evaluated in this way.

One of the few evaluations utilizing an experimental design in a field setting was the evaluation of a second language teaching programme for primary school students in KwaZulu/Natal, done by researchers of the Human Sciences Research Council (see Mouton, 1995, in press). A pre-test-post-test experimental design was used, with two experimental groups and a control group. A particularly useful contribution of this study is its reflection on the severe constraints placed on sampling and design by practical constraints of the environment. These included the differences between urban and rural schools, the general lack of information available, political turmoil and violence, and general lack of infrastructure. In addition to measuring the outcomes of the programme, its implementation was monitored in a field study. This second study enabled the researchers to evaluate the degree and effectiveness of the implementation of the programme, and provided them with crucial information on the classroom which turned out to be essential for interpreting the experimental results.

4   The debate between qualitative and quantitative researchers is as vigorous in South Africa as elsewhere. Fetterman's visit to South Africa strengthened the qualitative position considerably, in that it provided legitimization to much that local researchers were doing. The visit by Lipsey, who works much more in a quantitative paradigm, provided illuminating examples of just how vigorous these debates are. Quite a few people left the workshop he presented in Pretoria in 1994 early on — because, they said, the quantitative paradigm is too contrary to what they believed evaluation should be. A warning sounded by Lee Sechrest in 1992 might have to be repeated here: there is a tendency to view fourth generation evaluation as more "moral' than earlier generations. If we fall into this trap I believe we will be doing harm to the field of evaluation and to the ultimate beneficiaries of its services: the South African public.

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5   Almost all evaluators will pay at least lip service to the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluation. Indeed, this is reflected in some of the research mentioned above, e.g. Oosthuizen (1993) and Mouton (1995). Further examples are easy to find: Agar (1989; 1992) and Singini and Vink (unpublished document).

6. Programme *theory* appears to be very much neglected. More attention is needed to the question: Why should a programme work? To provide an answer, programme inputs, outputs, and the causal processes which mediate the relationship between inputs and outputs should be studied. I believe part of the reason for this is because most South African evaluation work is programme evaluation and not programme research, to use a distinction by Cordray and Lipsey (1986). That is, most of the local studies focus on the questions: How good is a programme? Was it worth doing? How can it be made better? Thus such studies are oriented toward providing a practical service to evaluation clients. However, the questions: How does a program work? What are its effects? What mediates those effects?, however, are questions of research into programmes at a more theoretical, abstract level, and less at a level of immediate utility. Thus my impression would be that most South African evaluation research would be of the kind that has short-term practical concerns rather than theoretical concerns.

7   In the public health domain, much health service research can be place under the rubric of evaluation. At the Medical Research Council, for example, most of the work is on health systems research. A substantial part of the health system consists of delivery of services, and these services or interventions are evaluated mainly in terms of equity, efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility. Methods typically used are record reviews, household surveys, cost-benefit analyses, time and work studies, participant and non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of programme evaluation in this domain. Funders in particular call for evaluations, and particularly for summative evaluations, with the result that much of the work in health systems research is of this nature. Service organizations often see this as a threat, and findings are then difficult to implement. The feeling from people in the field is that more attention should be paid to formative evaluation. This is an important exception to the impression reported above that much of the local evaluation work is of a formative nature.

Informants reported that most public health researchers accept the need for integrating qualitative and quantitative research, as indicated in general earlier. Furthermore, they believe that the field can do with more exposure to issues in evaluation, as social science researchers are more sophisticated in matters of methodology.

8   I have come across little in the line of cost evaluations. A search of master's and doctoral dissertations, for example, produced five references to cost-effectiveness analysis and seven to cost-benefit analysis. In one such study, Meyer (1994) conducted a cost-benefit analysis of an Employee Assistance Programme, utilizing the records of a utility company. The main aim was to estimate the savings due to increase in job performance as a result of the programme. The major methodological difficulty of this study involved the data source: records were not standardized, were kept inefficiently, were missing in some cases, etc. Impey's (1985) dissertation dealt with the topic of cost-effectiveness of services to children.

Conclusion

Programme evaluation is a fledgling discipline in South Africa, practised by few people who work in relative isolation. Because it

straddles different disciplines, it is very difficult to form a disciplinary base and to organize evaluators.

Thus there is a narrow base to support the growth of programme evaluation financially and intellectually, unlike the situation in the USA. South Africa could be entering its "golden era" of evaluation, given our current emphasis on policy, programmes, and projects to address the legacies of apartheid. Questions remain, however, concerning the availability of a sufficient body of reasonably well-organized evaluators, training facilities, and financial viability.

South African evaluators would also need to be more publication-conscious. It is extremely difficult to advance the field locally if we remain largely unaware of what is being done. Of course, many evaluators do publish their work, but because of the disciplinary fragmentation these reports often appear in fields as disparate as economics, education, public administration, psychology and sociology. One consequence of this review process could be an attempt to collect a number of "state of the art" evaluations in this country, and publish them in a monograph.

Programme evaluation requires genuine interdisciplinary thinking about what is being evaluated, and how. Impressions suggest in this respect, too, that South Africa seems to be a generation or so behind other countries which have strong programme evaluation capacity. Much work will have to be done in this regard.

Already there is an awareness of the need to evaluate, in the widest sense of the word. Individuals and organizations in South Africa are beginning to think beyond the present, and to anticipate that difficult decisions about policies and programmes will have to be made in the future. These will include questions about which programmes to implement and support financially, who will decide whether policies and programmes are working, what criteria will be used for these decisions, and so on. This ought to be the stimulus for a vigorous field

trust in management and commitment to the company. It should be made clear that this would probably leave the company in a far worse position than if they had not embarked on the process in the first place.

- Establish the company's responsibilities.
    - Consult with any unions involved and preferably include them in the management of the process. Without union clearance, the survey has no chance of being carried through. This might seem like a given in 1995, but it most definitely was not in the eighties and management often resisted this notion or failed to implement their responsibilities.
    - Establish an Employee Survey Management Committee (including all the important stakeholders such as top management, middle management, supervisors, union representatives and others), to oversee the process.
    - Inform all concerned as to the implementation of the investigation, including an explanation of the various stages of the process.
    - Commit the human resources department to assisting with the logistics of the survey and line management's commitment to releasing staff for interviews.
    - Provide adequate accommodation for the private and confidential interviews. It is the company's responsibility to ensure that the physical location is private, and that the people drawn from the sample are made available for interviewing.
    - Guarantee the anonymity of the respondents. The company is expected to commit itself to honouring this anonymity. Neither the list of people interviewed nor the completed questionnaires are disclosed to management or any party other than the research team.
- Establish the content and scope of the investigation.
- Establish parameters for handling, reporting and communicating the findings with broad participation. It has become clear that it is important to set up these parameters at the beginning of the

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process wherever possible. This also serves to gain and establish the commitment of the company to the process as a whole.

■ Establish the company's commitment to driving the process in general. This cannot be over-emphasised, for no matter how good the facilitation, ultimately management has to drive the process by leading and learning in consultation with a full complement of inputs.

Once these issues have been resolved to the satisfaction of the research leaders, the organization, the unions and others involved, a contract for the "intervention" can be signed. Here it is important that the contract indemnify the researchers against interruptions caused by the organization's abrogation of its responsibilities.

Pilot study

The pilot study should be embarked upon with careful consideration of the timing. It has to be close enough to the starting date of the planned survey but with sufficient lead time to work through the information gathered in the pilot study and to be able to renegotiate any issues that arise and that might need to be confronted.

In order for a pilot study to be conducted, there is a certain amount of background research that needs to done before a preliminary questionnaire can be constructed for approval by all parties.

It is essential that a holistic investigation of the organization be conducted, involving the following:

■ Organization's market related context;
■ Physical layout
■ Organizational structure
■ Company policies
■ Labour force components
■ Racial components
■ Specifics of regional settings
■ History of industrial relations

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The research team can then formulate a preliminary questionnaire for consultation with the various parties. It has been shown from experience that each company is unique. Therefore, while the schedule can utilize stock questions, it is important to tailor the schedule for the specifics of the particular investigation. Schedules can be designed so that they flow in a logical sequence and are useful to the particular interviewee as a kind of career development interview. In many cases it has been found that the survey was the first time the interviewee had had such a "career development interview". Often the interviewer has to deal with the negative effect of that review.

It has been found that a mixture of quantitative type questions can be illuminated by follow-up qualitative questions. These qualitative questions can be post-coded so as to yield numerical data and provide nuanced understanding of the quantitative data.

The wording of the questionnaire has to capture the appropriate information but also be user-friendly and accurately translated into the vernacular when necessary. The translation is something that has to be checked and rechecked continually throughout the process.

Basically one conducts the pilot study to:
- Fine-tune the interview questionnaire
- Establish survey logistics
- Uncover any hidden agendas.

Sample

Two kinds of sampling are used:
- A stratified random sample is drawn from staff lists (A 15-20% sample is drawn).
- A larger sample is drawn from management owing to their generally small numbers. In some cases all managers need to be interviewed.

Finalize questionnaire
- This is structured as a "career development" interview. The interview schedule needs to have a logic and rhythm that makes

sense to the respondent. Designing it like a career development interview allows the process to have a purpose for the respondent, making the experience worthwhile.

- Mix quantitative and qualitative questions so that the qualitative questions expand on the quantitative, providing nuance and context to the numerical answers.
- Include an interviewer rating scale. This involves an overall rating of the satisfaction and level of fear of the particular respondent and acts as a check on results. In cases where there is a lot of fear among some of the respondents this rating can be used to analyse the results, i.e. satisfied versus dissatisfied, or fearful versus not fearful.

Conducting the interviews

- Thoroughly brief and train the interviewers. Their neutral stance is an essential component of the process.
- Match interviewers with the sample.
- Explain the purpose of the interview to the respondent.
- Conduct interviews in strictly private circumstances.
- Debrief fieldworkers on a daily basis -
  - to provide support and guidance to the fieldworkers on their day-to-day encounters with the context under investigation.
  - to indicate countertransference in the process. One has to handle the emotional stress faced by the interviewers. This must not be underestimated nor left to chance.
  - to provide insights and perceptions for inclusion in the findings. This dialogue is important for the insights it stimulates and produces, thereby building investigative teamwork and developing capacity among the fieldworkers.
  - to provide an opportunity to correct any problems with the questionnaire or logistics.

Data analysis

- Post-code qualitative questions.
- Computerize and analyse data, utilizing cross tabs.
- Write a report including all findings the "warts and all"

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anonymous verbatim statements – to contextualize and nuance the statistics and tentative recommendations for consideration by the workshops and management.

Workshop processes

Workshops inform representatives of the findings and recommendations and provide a forum for discussing strategies and solutions.

■ Report to top management: The final report of the survey investigation is presented to top management or the organizational survey management team if there is one (i.e. including union representatives) for their information and to finalize the strategy and logistics for the workshop process.

■ Workshop with representatives of top management, supervisors and shop stewards: This workshop, with representatives of top management, line management, unions and employees, examines the findings and recommendations and then produces long-term, medium-term and short-term strategies for dealing with the issues identified.

■ Regional workshops with management, supervisors, shop stewards and employees: These workshops are held if the organization has more than one site in a particular region or various regional components. The aim of these workshops is to fine-tune the strategies in general as well as to tailor the strategies to the particular needs of the region.

Feedback process

The short-, medium- and long-term strategies, once agreed to by all the parties concerned, are then communicated to the entire workforce by their direct line management with the assistance of top management. This can be achieve via the following:

■ Workteam briefings by line management, accompanied by written summary reports on the findings and the strategies for dealing with the issues raised.

■ Briefing meeting for entire regions, led by line management and

top management.

- Video presentation by the research leader (presenting findings), and the chief executive officer (presenting strategies and commitment to them).
- Findings, strategies and commitment published in the organization's own magazine or special publication in their entirety.

This process can be repeated at an appropriate interval to check the benchmarks in order to monitor developments definitively. In the meantime all parties can monitor progress and adjust target dates and strategies as things unfold.

Usefulness and limitations

The essential element is the process of building trust through consultation, dialogue and negotiation. This implementation process, for human relations climate investigations, including the workshop process is only a beginning that can facilitate organizational learning towards a shared inspiration − that is, a shared "story" (history).

The key is the commitment and trust built through a common process of searching for implementable strategies for alleviating problems and ameliorating the conditions of all employees and their communities. The aim is a process whereby favours are granted to all employees in terms of their abilities rather than just to those "favoured". By cutting through the informal channels of communication which entrench old habits, this process can allow the entrenchment of clear and direct communication. The air will have been cleared by the investigation, thus providing the definitive beginning of a new psychological contract, increasing productivity and nurturing development.

In a time of rapid social, political and economic change in the hands of innovative leadership, appropriately facilitated, a process such as this can prove useful in clearing backlogs and barriers so that learning to solve conflicts creatively can begin in earnest.

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The following are some of the major limitations:

- Each situation is different with its own unique structures, dynamics and particular features. It is dangerous to generalise from one situation to another.
- Commitment to the process must be gained from most, if not all, parties, and certainly from all the major players. If top management, the union, or any other major player is not totally committed and prepared to act on the findings of the survey process, do not begin the process.
- It is expensive and time-consuming.
- There is a risk of heightening conflict and mistrust. Do not enter the process unless you are prepared to follow it through.
- Facilitation and mediation must be appropriate, honest, insightful and professional.
- A process, no matter how ingenious, can never replace the insight and feeling gained from direct experience of the nuances of a situation, or the judgements and actions required. It can only guide in a general sort of way. The participants themselves will determine the outcomes through their diligence, honesty and judgement.

Innovations and new directions

In other democratic societies, where structures of conflict resolution in the country and in organizations are more firmly established, surveys are carried out on a regular basis, as often as every six months, so as to attend proactively to dissatisfactions or non-productive processes before crises are reached. The organizational surveys come to complement "the way things are done". In those situations, surveys can be adequately conducted through group discussions and other more-cost effective methods as suggested by Shane (1993). However, in South Africa of the middle 1990s, which is only beginning to emerge from confrontational dynamics, it is still necessary to utilize

the more expensive in-depth personal interviews so as to avoid the group pressures towards conformity entailed by the needs of solidarity. In time, the costs of such surveys will decline, as more cost-effective methods become more possible, adn as the democratic spirit of trust and cooperative productivity grows.

The new Labour Relations Bill will legislate inclusive workplace forums. The Cosatu position that the forms should be union-based was rejected in the Bill, making the proposed workplace forums inclusive of union and other worker representatives. This bodes well for labour relations in South African organizations. However, if these forums are to work as they should, to open dialogue and discussion towards greater harmony and productivity in the workplace, they will have to find a way out of the combative and confrontational workplace relationships that have developed over the years of struggle against apartheid and exploitation. A process needs to be instituted whereby the old patterns are questioned and replaced by a concerted effort by all participants to formulate workable strategies for resolving issues productively, thereby developing a climate of trust. If these workplace forums develop simply into "sites of struggle" their purpose will be negated.

The organizational survey can make a major contribution to this important development within South African organizations by playing a mediating role in establishing in a somewhat objective manner the issues that require attention — especially as such surveys present the issues in a non-confrontational manner and escape the traditional thinking that holds people in habitual positions. The organizational survey provides an in-depth view of the situation, useful as a facilitating focus of dialogue, action and morale, thereby facilitating a productive and developmental approach. Without such an intervening process the danger remains that the workplace forums may quickly degenerate into confrontational negotiations, defeating productivity and the development of trust.

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Geographical information systems

E.L. Nel and T. Hill

GIS provides geographers with ways of handling regional information "that they have sought for 2 000 years. GIS are simultaneously the telescope, the microscope, the computer and the xerox machine of regional analysis and synthesis" (Abler, 1988:137).

Introduction

Geographical Information Systems, commonly known by the acronym 'GIS', has acquired the status of being one of the most widely used forms of data management and analysis in the academic, business and administration sectors (Maguire et al., 1991). GIS came to the fore in the early 1970s in the United States and Canada when geographers designed computer-based systems to capture, store and analyse geographical or spatial data. It was only in the mid-1980s that the first GIS systems came to be applied in South Africa (Du Toit, 1989; Cooper and Hobson, 1993). Although the initial focus of GIS was on academic institutions, the applied nature of this management tool was soon recognized by business and government. Large banking and other corporations, engineering concerns (Poolman, 1990), numerous government departments, town and regional planners (Truter, 1990; Drake, 1991; Zietsman, 1992; Venter, 1993) and several dozen

municipalities (Szecsei, 1990; Van Rensburg, 1992) have now come to depend on GIS for their standard operations (Border, 1994). In South African academic institutions GIS tends to be applied more as a research tool than as a defined analytical procedure (Zietsman, 1993; Caselli, 1994). Few articles have been written about GIS *per se* in South Africa, although the GIS technology has been applied as a research tool forming the basis of a number of research papers.

This paper seeks to detail what GIS is, how it developed in South Africa and what its current uses and applications in South African universities are. It also seeks to assess its analytical and other contributions as a research methodology and discusses possible future considerations.

A definition of GIS, its development and methodology

GIS systems developed in response to the perceived need to manipulate spatially referenced data, i.e. data which have defined points of reference on the surface of the earth in terms of a referencing system such as latitude and longitude (Green, *et al.*, 1985). Such information can reflect naturally occurring features such as geomorphology or vegetation or human created features such as roads, buildings, agriculture etc. GIS provides a computer system which allows for the inputting of spatial co-ordinates and subsequent computer generated drawing of maps. In addition, data on multiple variables in the same area can be overlaid on a single map, e.g. vegetation and relief features to identify areas in which there appear to be positive or negative correlations between the variables under consideration (Hill & Nel). This capacity assists in the testing of hypotheses, problem solving and the taking of decisions, e.g. identifying areas of deforestation/afforestation (Thompson, 1992; Rowntree, 1993), improving agricultural practices (Anon., 1991; Marrao, 1992; Coetsee, 1992, 1993), hydrological modelling (Miller, 1991; Tarboton, 1992) and the facilitation of the collection and analysis of census data (Illinge, 1994). Another feature of GIS is its

ability to interface with conventional database systems such that the selection of a particular spatial point on a computer screen permits one to access information which is not necessarily spatial in its nature, e.g. selecting a town on a map could permit one to access demographic data, etc. on that town from a related data base (Peuquet and Marble, 1986; Fincham and Piper, 1991; Cassettari, 1993).

According to Cooper and Hobson (1993:2) "a GIS is a computer system that efficiently captures, stores, retrieves, maintains, validates, integrates, manages, manipulates, and displays digital geo-referenced information". A similar view is expressed by Fincham and Berjak (1990:2) who regard GIS as "a structured approach to collecting, archiving, manipulating, and displaying graphic and nongraphic data having one or more geographic components, using a combination of personnel, equipment, computer software, and organizational proce-dures". In addition to the preceding, GIS goes further by providing an underlying basis for decision support and management, modelling and forecasting. GIS quite clearly has a role to play as a "decision support system" in strategic planning in that it has advanced to the level where it can provide the researcher or the manager with the information needed to make decisions (Goodchild, 1988, 1991; Maguire *et al.*, 1991).

GIS as a research tool cannot be said to have developed from a well-defined theoretical base; instead it emerged parallel with the growing capacity of computer systems to handle new forms of data and with the perceived need in geography and other disciplines for such a system (Unwin, 1994). Its methodology is precise, rigid and clear. It requires the selection of a topic for investigation, a decision on which data to input, followed by the physical plotting of spatial data with the aid of a digitizer or scanner, and the related inputting of relevant databases. Thereafter, the user has to select between a variety of procedures available in each programme to map and correlate data. The result of this procedure allows the user to draw up defined

research conclusions or assist with policy decisions. As a methodology, GIS has developed very rapidly, particularly in the last 10 years, with its ability to process vast amounts of data clearly making a significant contribution to the research areas in which it has been applied.

Although GIS has roots extending back nearly 25 years, the past 10 years have seen an explosion of interest which has had an enormous impact on geography and, to some extent, on all disciplines which deal with spatial data. The reasons for this are complex. First, despite its origin in the analysis of land resource maps, GIS is in reality a conglomeration of interests. It brings together cartographers interested in the use of digital methods and their extension beyond automated mapping to manipulation and analysis; surveyors and photogrammatists with similar interests in extending the usefulness of digital products beyond simple land copy maps; and spatial analysts and geographers who see GIS as a route to larger, more comprehensive databases and better analytical techniques. The technique is also applied by remote sensing experts with their desire to combine satellite data with other sources and to extend the range of possible analysis (Cracknell and Hayes, 1991; Anon., 1992).

Second, current interest in GIS is the direct result of the popularization of computing which occurred with the introduction of personal computers during the early 1980s. At the same time steady increases in computing power and reductions in cost have meant that significant spatial data handling technology is more readily available.

Despite current enthusiasm, the rate of adoption of GIS concepts and techniques has been slow. GIS does not automate an existing manual process, but rather is the development of a new approach to spatial analysis. In essence the field is technology driven, rather than application driven.

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The development of GIS in South Africa and its current uses

Following the initial utilization of GIS as a research tool in the mid-1980s in various research institutions, most prominently the Institute for Natural Resources in Pietermaritzburg, its use has become far more widespread. The availability of various international GIS packages, as well as the development of some local products, most notably the 'ReGIS' system by an offshoot of the Denel group, assisted in this trend. In 1991, in an effort to standardize data compatibility and exchange, the National Exchange Standard or NES was established to ensure standardization between databases. This process sprang largely from the endeavours of the Computer Science Division of the former National Institute for Mathematical Science of the CSIR (Clarke, 1988). However, South Africa has relied heavily on technology, programmes and methods developed overseas, a situation which is unlikely to change dramatically in the future (Cooper and Hobson, 1993). Nontheless reliance helps to ensure that South African GIS users are up to date with developments elsewhere.

Following improvements in technology, the NES and the increasing popularity of GIS concepts, many universities began to use the system from the late-1980s (Anon. 1993a; Wilsher, 1993). GIS has not been confined to its initial base in Geography departments and has come to be utilized in numerous disciplines including Town Planning, Surveying, Hydrology, Botany, Geology and Zoology, to name the most common, as well as a host of research institutes (Hill & Nel, n.d.). Precise details of the use of GIS in tertiary institutions features in the following section. The potential of GIS was soon recognized by government departments, with several starting to utilize GIS by the late 1980s and early 1990s. The most notable examples are the Departments of Agriculture and Water Affairs, the Office of the Surveyor-General and the Army. The government uses GIS in a variety of ways; for example, the Department of Water Affairs has mapped drainage basins and riverine features, all of which can be

interfaced with non-spatial attribute data, e.g. to display river run-off and rainfall statistics. The Surveyor-General is now in a position to supply spatial data in digital format which will significantly enhance the research and other applications of GIS. Map production and reproduction will be speeded up and will improve map currency. In the area of demographic information, GIS is currently being used by the government to analyse population distributions and to assist election officials in the placement of future election booths to maximize accessibility to voters (Murgatroyd pers. com., 1995). An area in which GIS is coming into its own is in the field of remote sensing, where GIS can assist with the processing of data derived from satellite images (Fortesque, 1994; Tanser, 1994).

GIS has the potential to be applied as an analytical tool in landscape ecology and natural resource management (Marrao, 1990; Retief, 1991; Fabricius, 1992; Bothma, 1993; Marrao, 1993; Piper, 1993). GIS is being used by nature conservation bodies to compare the spatial distribution of biologically rich or unique conservation areas in South Africa, relative to the present distribution of nature reserves. In so doing they are helping to identify the gaps in the present array of nature reserves and this should give a clear indication which areas, both new and existing, are worthy of consideration as priorities for conservation purposes (Lombard *et al.*, 1992).

The ability of GIS to store and process vast amounts of detail regarding precise spatial features has made it an invaluable component of the everyday functioning of all the major municipalities in the country. According to Van der Merwe (n.d.) there are over 33 generic municipal tasks requiring land related information in a procedural and managerial context. The most common municipal uses are in electricity, water, sewerage, valuations and rates departments (Loubser, pers. com., 1994). In the business world large banking, advertising, mining and transport corporations, appreciating the significant contribution which GIS can make to the overall efficiency of their operations, have become active users (Border, 1994).

Applications range from the use of objective criteria for selecting the placement of new commercial facilities to the use of GIS in conjunction with Geographical Positioning Systems, in transportation vehicles (Hogarth, 1992; Anon, 1993b). The latter links a satellite positioning system to road vehicles and a GIS which permits the company to pinpoint the location of their vehicles anywhere in the country. This use of GIS in the business and public sectors spurred on, and paralleled, the development of increasingly more user-friendly, purpose-designed GIS and matching back-up, support and maintenance systems.

Despite this widespread application in a variety of fields, there unfortunately does not appear to be any significant interaction between academics and the product developers. The development of business support systems does not appear to have impacted significantly on academic spheres even though GIS clearly is being utilized with success in many academic departments. Another concerning factor would appear to be the very limited degree to which academics are contributing to the scientific development of GIS. Most practitioners tend to use GIS as a research tool, rather than focus on the research and development of GIS *per se*. Significantly, though, many graduates of academic departments which utilise GIS are finding employment in the business and private sectors. It appears as if Technikons have not yet begun providing skilled GIS trainees, while people with a general computer science background lack the specialized knowledge, such as in the natural sciences which employers appears to want and which departments such as Surveying and Geography are able to supply.

The use and application of GIS as a research method in South Africa

It is apparent that most universities use GIS for teaching and research purposes. It is most commonly housed in the following departments: Geography (17 departments out of 21 potential departments), Geology (4 departments), Town and Regional Planning

(3 departments), Landscape and Agriculture, Zoology, Botany, Engineering, Hydrology, Surveying, Conservation Biology and research institutes. The larger, more established universities such as Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Cape Town and Orange· Free State have multiple departments equipped with GIS, while the historically disadvantaged universities either do not have any GIS or are just starting to use the technology (Hill & Nel, n.d.).

From the survey it was established that at 16 universities students are trained in GIS, mainly at the third year and honours levels. In 13 universities GIS is used for research and consultancy work by both students and staff. A greater diversity of research applications and taught courses are offered at the more established universities (Hill & Nel, n.d.).

■   Current and completed research topics include:
■   soil erosion potential estimation
■   tuberculosis tracing
■   heritage preservation
■   municipal administration
■   crime patterns
■   environmental planning
■   land management
■   bird and protea atlas
■   community data base
■   restructuring school education
      determination of catchment areas for health facilities
■   groundwater quality assessment
■   coastal aquifers and management
■   geological mapping
■   delimiting catchment rivers for dams
      (Hill & Nel, n.d.)

An examination of the application of GIS in South African universities reveals major disparities. Although it is clearly desirable to ensure access to the technology by a broad cross-section of

institutions and disciplines, major impediments include the sheer cost of hardware and software which is constantly changing and a tremendous shortage of skilled academic staff who can both apply and teach GIS. Given staffing and cost constraints, it might well prove feasible to consider the sharing of resources and personnel between institutions to derive maximum benefit.

South African academics seldom appear to be involved with the development of GIS programmes, and instead tend to be engaged more in training and research using only limited aspects of the totality of GIS. It would appear that there are limited numbers of people in the country who have received training *and* are engaged in applied GIS research; most users tend to have been self-taught. The criticism has often been raised that South African academics have been slow to implement GIS. The authors feel that this could be attributed to a number of factors including

- the technological conservatism of the academic community,
- lack of funds in universities to provide the technological infrastructure needed, and
- resistance to change.

Despite the frequent application of GIS in the physical sciences, there appears to be considerable scope for using the system to assist in the socio-economic upliftment of the country (Truter, 1990, 1991; Retief, 1991; Hine, 1994; Scott, 1994). The planning of low cost housing (Anon, 1988) and voting booths are cases in point as is the use of GIS by Ainslie, *et al.* (1994) to investigate resource management issues in particular socio-economic contexts in the Fish River valley. The latter study indicates the potential which GIS has to assist with interdisciplinary research. The ability of the system to process large amounts of different types of data makes it ideally suited to assist with such research. Discussions with various organizations such as the Independent Development Trust and the Reconstruction and Development Programme unit have indicated that GIS is being evaluated as

a tool which can assist in the implementation of socio-economic change and development in the country (Martin, 1991; Nel, pers. com., 1994).

Discussion

In any assessment of GIS and its capacity, one needs to take cognizance of the reality that GIS cannot really be described as a method of analysis. Instead, it should rather be perceived as an analytical or research tool which assists the user to better understand, comprehend and identify spatial patterns and relationships. GIS is, as such, a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The authors were able to identify only a very limited number of applied South African articles which discuss the essential methodology and capacity of GIS (Andrew, 1991; Lombard et al., 1992), as opposed to the many which discuss its potential or apply it as an incidental research tool.

GIS's ultimate usefulness has been demonstrated by the rapid growth in the number of users of the various systems available on the market. One of the most noteworthy contributions of GIS is the fact that it can contribute to both the human and natural sciences and, simultaneously, has the potential to encourage interdisciplinary work. The ability of GIS to interface both human and environmental data, e.g. on demographics and agriculture, can make a valuable future contribution to pure and applied research. This will become particularly pertinent as the development priorities of the country become more urgent, in line with those identified by the Reconstruction and Development Programme. GIS is increasingly coming into its own as a system which is assisting in a variety of instances, e.g. the development of a GIS for the planning and management of the Maputaland area (Fincham and Berjak, 1990). It is also used to assist in the planning of water schemes, farming, demographic recording, natural resource inventories and locational analysis. It is in this area of

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applied research that GIS is making and will make an accelerating contribution to the development needs of the country, particularly as technology and human resource skills develop.

As the potential of the South African GIS market is perceived as being significant, it is imperative that the user be aware of the following possible problems:

- There is only limited educational infrastructure for the training of both users and maintainers of GIS systems. The user base can be misguided by vendor's interests or by personal biases.
- The potential of GIS is typically first perceived by the applied user, who is generally not at managerial level. Convincing management of the advantages of the technology is often a difficult task.
- Owing to insufficient knowledge among users, those who have purchased systems have often greatly underestimated the financial and human resources required to implement and maintain these systems.
- The availability of data in digital form is scarce, hampering certain potential users in its implementation. The cost of capturing base data is often too high for a single institution to bear, making it difficult to justify investment in this technology.

The potential of users at a research level is also restricted by further factors:

- Resistance to change
- Misunderstanding or ignorance of the technology
- Lack of funds available to research institutions

Future considerations

The future of GIS in the country appears to be a bright one. According to Fincham and Berjak (1990:7), "the future incorporation of GIS within organisations in SA is assured as GIS will increasingly assist with decision making". In addition to making systems more user-friendly and compatible with a variety of data sources, there is a very

clear movement to make more use of GIS both as a decision-making tool which allows for objective and efficient management of integrated "information systems" (Murgatroyd pers. com., 1995). There appears to be a move to develop 'information systems' to complement and assist management, such that these systems go beyond the traditional spatial bias of GIS,· and focus on integrating the databases of a company or an institution, thereby assisting those in authority to manage their operations and their human resources better.

Given the commercial applications of GIS, some of the latest technology is available in South Africa from around the world. In addition, the pioneering efforts of ReGIS, a local company, are paying off and an international market is developing for their product. Although, in general terms, the country clearly appears to be in tune with the state of the art worldwide, the same can only be said with difficulty about GIS in academic institutions. Rapid changes in technology, high costs of computer hardware and software, and the steep learning curve associated with these changes make it difficult for academics to keep pace with the rapidity and cost of change. There are very few institutions which have full-time, GIS personnel and, with few exceptions, changes in technology and procedures are often difficult to keep track of. An added problem is the reality that many graduates with GIS training are "snapped up" by the business sector because of their marketability; this severely limits their involvement in academic research.

From a research and funding perspective it might well prove desirable to support only a limited number of "centres of excellence" in GIS. This will reduce expenditure and allow for the funds that are required to keep pace with technological changes to be focused on a limited number of institutions. These centres could assist and support other institutions in training and research where the latter are less able to keep up with changes in technology and skill requirements. Such centres, by their inherent nature, could and should encourage and focus on interdisciplinary research projects, particularly between the

human and physical sciences. Research in aspects of rural development and resource management and planning is of tremendous importance to the needs of the country, and these could be ideal foci.

A key future consideration will be the need to train more personnel in the use of GIS. The high level of skills required to apply, manipulate and manage GIS is a barrier to the wide-spread use of the technology, despite the valuable contribution which it can make in a developing country. Quite clearly the question of GIS education appropriate to research, business, community and public sector requirements merits greater attention if the systems are to be applied more widely (Raper, 1993). Educational institutions are, as a rule, responsible for providing the educational infrastructure to support the requirements of society. They therefore have a duty to take the initiative to provide curriculums which serve such purposes (Kemp *et al.*, 1992).

As the needs of the country alter and the Reconstruction and Development Programme becomes a more prominent feature of development planning in the country, the authors feel GIS has much to offer. GIS can play a variety of roles from assisting with the selection of sites for clinics, schools etc. to the efficient management of financial and personnel resources, to the storage of spatial referenced data detailing demographics, development needs, current project fund expenditure and plans.

Conclusion

GIS is clearly developing into a well-utilized tool in South Africa. The fact that GIS is being developed locally is a credit to the local state of the art. From an academic perspective, cost and skills requirements are a major constraint. None-the-less, it would appear that GIS has much of applied relevance to offer researchers concerned with meeting the needs of a changing South Africa. The scope for interdisciplinary research clearly exists. There is however a need to ensure that institutions do not lag too far behind the business world in

terms of skills and if they aspire to be among the limited number of centres of excellence that merit support.

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Sampling in heterogeneous populations

D.J. Stoker

Background

In the social sciences quite often use is made of sample surveys to obtain information in respect of some or other (target) population.[1] For example, to determine the state of poverty of the inhabitants of a country, a sample[2] of households is drawn and interviewed by making use of a measuring instrument such as a questionnaire. From the results obtained from the sample elements (i.e. households in the sample) conclusions are drawn about the general state of poverty of households in the country. For this generalization of the sample results on poverty to that of the (sampled) population[3] to be valid, it is crucial that the sample should give a true reflection or representation of the characteristics of the population, i.e. the sample must be representative of the population in respect of the characteristics under consideration. This representativeness of the sample or ensuring thereof lies at the core of sampling[4] in practice.

What was the state of the art in respect of sampling in practice in the social sciences in the early eighties? A number of examples are given below to illustrate the application of sampling at that time and to point out its shortcomings from a theoretical perspective. Some of

these practices exist even today, for example, among market research organizations. These examples are:

- A postal survey of persons 18 years and older using the voter's roll as sampling frame[5] and systematic sampling as sampling method. Problems resulting from this methodology are
  - the low response rate of a postal survey which casts serious doubt on the representativeness of the realized sample
  - the incompleteness and outdatedness of the voting roll as sampling frame (i.e. coverage problem).
- Sampling a deep-rural area by driving by car through the area, stopping every 500 metres for example, and selecting a dwelling, alternatively on the left and on the right sides of the road and alternatively adjacent to the road and some distance from the road. The problem is
  - this selection method has no scientific base as the drawn sample is not a probability sample.[6] and no valid generalization from the sample to the population is possible.
- Sampling a deep-rural area by placing a grid over a map (say on the scale 1 : 50 000) of the area and drawing systematically intersection points of the grid to indicate areas drawn in the sample. The problem is
  - this selection method is not a probability sample since the selection probability of any specific dwelling in the target area cannot be calculated or determined, consequently no valid generalisation of the sample results is possible.
- Sampling an urban area by using area probability quota sampling. Problems resulting from this methodology are
  - selection of households or persons in a drawn area is done in a convenient (non-probability) way
- substitution rate owing to non-compliance with quota controls or owing to some form of non-response is unknown and in general high – again resulting in a non-probability sample and no valid generalization of the sample results is possible.
- Sampling randomly without taking the heterogeneity of the

population into consideration, resulting in a non-representative sample with a detrimental effect on the sampling errors of the estimates.

■ Making use of the formula for estimating the standard error of an estimate which is based on simple random sampling irrespective of whether a probability sampling technique was used and, if so, whether the sampling technique was simple random sampling. Incorrect usage of this formula results in grossly overestimating the precision of the estimates.

Discussion of the method

The problems indicated above have been overcome by introducing complex sampling, i.e. multi-stage stratified cluster sampling, based on true probability sampling and making use of an appropriate sampling frame. In the first sampling stage of complex sampling clusters or groups of population elements, so-called primary sampling units (PSUs) are drawn with probability proportional to an appropriate measure of size (MOS). This measure of size is determined by the problem to be investigated and could be, for example, the number of persons of 18 years and older (in an attitudinal study), the number of households (in a household income and expenditure study) or the number of Std 10 pupils (for standardization of a psychological test). Only global data is used in the first sampling stage to draw the PSU, i.e. a list of the PSUs together with their MOSs – no detailed sampling frame is needed at this stage. For example, in order to draw a sample of Std 10 pupils in the RSA, a list of schools with Std 10 classes together with the approximate number of Std 10 pupils in each school (which could be the number of Std 10 pupils in the previous year) will suffice to draw in the first sampling stage the required number of schools (as PSUs) with probability proportional to the approximate number of Std 10 pupils in the schools.

After the sample of PSUs (e.g. schools) has been drawn in the first sampling stage, population elements (e.g. Std 10 pupils) have to be

drawn in the second sampling stage. These population elements (e.g. Std 10 pupils) are drawn only from the selected PSUs (e.g. schools) drawn in the first sampling stage. To obtain a self-weighting sample, i.e. a sample drawn in such a way that each population element has the same probability of being drawn in the sample, an equal number of population elements must be drawn with equal probability from each of the drawn PSUs. Consequently, a detailed list or sampling frame of population elements (e.g. Std 10 pupils) is required only for the drawn PSUs (e.g. schools) and not for all PSUs in the population.

A self-weighting sample of population elements can be obtained either

■ by drawing the PSUs with probability proportional to the MOS (number of population elements per PSU) and thereafter *an equal number* of population elements with equal probability from each drawn PSU, or

■ by drawing the PSUs with equal probability and thereafter *a fixed proportion* of population elements with equal probability from each drawn PSU.

The reasons for trying to obtain a self-weighted sample are, among others, to simplify the formulas for the calculation of estimates and to improve the precision of the estimates.

The discussion of the method thus far presupposes a homogeneous target (or sampled) population. However, when the target population is heterogeneous with regard to the characteristic(s) of the population elements being studied, the population must first be subdivided into more homogeneous parts or strata, whereafter each stratum is sampled independently according to the principles discussed above. For this purpose one or more stratification variables are used which are related to or correlated with the characteristics being studied. Stratification not only ensures more precise estimates of the population characteristics but also a more representative sample of the population. In the case of the school example considered above, assuming the standardization of a psychological test as purpose of the study, logical

stratification variables would be province, metro/non-metro, urban/non-metro, rural classification and probably medium of instruction in order to obtain the best coverage (representation) of schools in the sample.

In complex sampling the population is not only stratified to improve the precision of estimates and to ensure that every important part of the population is represented in the sample, but often stratification is carried through to its limit. For example, if 8 Std. 10 pupils are to be drawn from each of 90 schools in the sample, resulting in a total sample size of 720, up to 45 strata can be formed allowing two schools to be drawn from each stratum (the minimum number of schools per stratum required to estimate the standard error and precision of the estimates).

The allocation of the total sample to the strata is normally done proportionally, i.e. the stratum sample size is determined in such a way that its MOS is in proportion to the stratum population MOS. The golden rule is to use proportional allocation, and deviation from this rule is acceptable only if it can be motivated (e.g. when a small part of the population or stratum is crucial to the investigation being undertaken).

Multi-stage sampling in general consists of two stages (as discussed above) or more stages. Stratification can be done at any stage depending on the situation at hand with the view to improving representativeness and precision. In the first sampling stage, after stratification has been implemented, clusters of population elements (i.e. PSUs) are formed in every stratum from which a small number are drawn. In the second sampling stage smaller clusters of population elements (called secondary sampling units or SSUs) are formed in each drawn PSU from which again a small number of these SSUs are drawn. This process ends when in the final sampling stage single population elements or a small cluster of population elements are drawn from each of the clusters drawn in the penultimate sampling stage.

In the application of complex sampling the design effect plays an important role. As mentioned above, stratification generally improves the precision of estimates (i.e. reduces the variation in the estimates). On the other hand, the use of cluster sampling in general results in less precise estimates (i.e. it increases the variation in the estimates). This is due to the fact that population elements belonging to the same cluster are in practice more similar than the population elements in general. For example, the Std. 10 pupils in the same school are more similar (in respect of background, method of training, having the same teachers, etc.) than Std. 10 pupils in the entire population. The combined effect of stratification and clustering on the precision of an estimate compared to the precision obtained by direct application of simple random sampling is measured by the design effect (deff) of the design. The design effect is defined by the ratio of the variance of an estimate using complex sampling to the variance of the estimate using simple random sampling.

In practice deff > 1 in general, which implies that with complex sampling a larger sample is required to obtain a specified precision compared to the sample size required if simple random sampling was used. The vital issue, however, is that although a larger sample is required when complex sampling is used, complex sampling is always to be preferred and used in (large) sample surveys since

■ it is more economical (lower costs) and practical,

■ it guarantees a better representative sample (resulting from comprehensive stratification), and

■ it does not require a complete sampling frame of the population elements.

Complex sampling as discussed has been implemented and used in the HSRC since the early eighties. Samples were designed as true probability samples based on the best available sampling frames at the various sampling stages. Weighting was introduced to compensate for unequal selection probabilities and for unit non-response (e.g. refusals).

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Substitution was avoided since its use results in non-probability sampling (i.e. the selection probability of any specific population element then can no longer be calculated), although limited over-sampling was used in some cases, admitting that any type of unit non-response (irrespective of the compensation technique used) could result in biased estimates. Finally, formulae for the calculation of the standard error and precision of estimates were used which take the complexity of the design into account.

Case studies

In the middle of 1990 the HSRC was approached by the Central Statistics Service to assist them with the 1991 population census by estimating the characteristics of the population by means of sample surveys in 88 metro, urban and rural areas. Among these areas were Soweto, Katlehong/Tokoza, Tembisa, Khayelitsha, Crossroads, Umlazi, KwaMashu and rural districts of KwaZulu, such as Mpumalanga, Embumbulu and Ndwedwe. Crucial to this study were correct and updated sampling frames. Consequently aerial photographs of these areas were taken over the period June to September 1990 and again over the period middle February to end of March 1991 (census night was 7 March 1991) for updating the first set of photographs. The first set of photographs was used to design and plan the project. Residential stands were first stratified according to the type and density of the housing on them, with a view to obtaining representative geographic coverage of the areas, whereafter they were grouped in clusters (i.e. PSUs) and a number of PSUs were drawn from each stratum with probability proportional to the number of stands (MOSs) in the PSUs. From each drawn PSU a fixed number of stands were drawn, whereafter every qualifying person on the drawn stands was enumerated by fieldworkers.

In the sample design it was aimed to obtain a relative precision of 7 % or better in the population estimate by making use of the appropriate formula for estimating the standard error of the estimate.

Weights used were based on the reciprocal of the selection probabilities and adjusted to compensate for unit non-response. Although the fieldwork was an enormous undertaking and resistance against the population census had to be overcome, very satisfactory results were obtained. This example could be considered as a final test of the usefulness and applicability of probability-based complex sampling and on a scale that has never been reached before in the RSA.

In 1992/93 the World Bank sponsored the National Living Standard Survey (also known as the National Poverty Survey) in the RSA, undertaken by the South African Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town. Their sample design, which was a true probability design, could be outlined as follows:

It was primarily a two-stage design using the 1991 population census enumerator areas (EAs) as primary sampling units (PSUs) and households as population elements. In the first sampling stage the EAs were grouped according to magisterial district, urban/rural classification, statistical region and province, in that ascending order. The EAs were drawn systematically from this EA sampling frame with probability proportional to population size. In the second sampling stage a fixed number of households were drawn independently from each drawn EA in the first stage by making use of equal probability systematic sampling from an *updated list of households.* It is interesting to note that the above sample design did not assume the correctness of the census, because the listing operation of households in the second stage provided an updating of the EA population in terms of households (i.e. population elements). The sample consisted of 360 EAs and approximately 25 households per drawn EA, that is approximately 9 000 households in total.

The above sample design is an approximately self-weighting design in which the PSUs have been arranged in such a way that the

best possible representation of the population in the sample would be obtained if systematic sampling were used. This approach is known as implicit stratification and produces a stratifying effect without the need for creating explicit strata. In the RSA race would be an effective explicit stratifying variable because of the wide differences in income and welfare between races. It was therefore important to get the racial distribution in the sample closely aligned with the racial distribution in the population. In implicit stratification this was achieved by ordering the units before selection in such a way that all households of each race were in the same part of the list or that all EAs of a given composition were grouped together in the list.

Many probability complex samples have been designed for sample surveys conducted by the HSRC since the early eighties, such as the population development studies, fertility surveys, current population surveys (for CSS), household income and expenditure surveys and many more, all based on the sound scientific principles discussed above.

Outdatedness of a sampling frame could destroy the probabilistic nature, i.e. the scientific character, of the sampling technique that has been discussed. Updating an outdated sampling frame can be very costly, but there is no alternative if a scientific sample survey is required. The two case studies discussed above illustrate how a true probability sample can be designed in a changing or mobile situation such as currently exists in the RSA, and how an outdated sampling frame can be updated.

Innovations and new directions

The sampling technique that has been discussed is very similar to sampling techniques used worldwide, for example in the World Fertility Surveys which were conducted during the seventies. The basic techniques were developed and first applied by the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Apart from introducing and applying probability complex sampling in the RSA, the author also introduced and applied controlled selection in the RSA. This technique was also extended to handle severe restrictions on stratification, including non-proportional allocation in stratified sampling.

In sample surveys it often occurs that the *realized* sample distributions in biographical variables, such as gender, age and educational level, do not resemble globally and/or per geographic area the population distributions of these variables as obtained from the most recent population census. This phenomenon occurs irrespective of whether non-response was compensated for. If any study variable is related to any of these biographical variables, "skewness" in the sample data as indicated above may or even will result in a biased estimate of this study variable. To reduce such bias, CHAID (Chi-square automatic interaction detection) was used to identify those biographical variables, in order of importance, which were responsible for the non-resemblance referred to above. This non-resemblance was compensated for by introducing a third weighting factor, a procedure which has become common practice in the HSRC.

Endnotes

1 Target population: Population or group of elements of which certain characteristics have to be investigated.

2 Sample: Subset of the population elements.

3 Sampled population: Population of elements from which the sample is actually drawn and which may differ from the target population.

4 Sampling: The process by means of which population elements are selected to constitute the sample.

5 Sampling frame: A "list" of entries, where each entry corresponds to one and only one element of the sampled population and covering jointly all elements of the sampled population.

6 Probability sample: A sample obtained by using a sampling procedure which ensures that each element of the sampled population has a known or determinable positive probability of being drawn in the sample.

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