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PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY is a journal which aims to critically explore and present ideas on the nature of psychology in capitalist society. There is a special emphasis on the theory and practice of psychology in the South African context.

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EDITORIAL

Talk of "relevant psychology" and "the crisis in psychology" is increasing in psychological circles in this country. The editors would like to see this new journal contributing to serious debate and understanding of a psychology which is clearly at a cross-roads. Discontent with mainstream psychology - or to use Russell Jacoby's telling polemical phrase, "conformist psychology" - is something which is becoming ever more apparent in the hallowed corridors of South African psychology departments. No longer can the portraits of Galton, Binet, Skinner, Titchener, Wundt, J B Watson, Fechner and, here and there, the token Rogers or the misunderstood Piaget, contain the critical searching of the South African psychology student (and hence, significantly, the South African psychologist). Our discipline is being torn apart by its inability to contribute meaningfully to a South African society increasingly in the throes of a deep structural crisis.

And yet, there has emerged from the crisis in psychology an increasing number of people prepared to ask the critical questions, and prepared to assert the contribution of psychology in overcoming our crippling apartheid society. It is our belief that this endeavour needs some kind of forum, and we hope that Psychology in Society can fill part of this gap.

The editorial which follows aims to set out the project of Psychology in Society. It has been written collectively by editors based in Durban and Johannesburg and, consequently, does

not represent a definitive position for each one of us. There are differences in our approach to the theory and practice of psychology which are not taken up here - the editorial should rather be seen as an attempt to open up some of the critical questions which we hope the journal will take up in the future.

Psychology in Society has been conceived by a group of South African psychologists who share a general critique of that network of ideas and practices that has come to be known as "psychology" in the Anglo-American world.¹ In particular, we share a concern as South Africans about the uses and abuses to which "psychology" is put in the maintenance of apartheid and other forms of social oppression in this country. And it is precisely this deficiency in mainstream psychology publishing (and thinking) that has prompted the editors of this journal to bring out a new dimension to psychological debate in South Africa.

There can be no doubt that psychological theory and political and social practice are intimately part of one another, no matter what the psychological establishment might think. The theoretical products of psychology are put to use in schools, prisons, hospitals and on the factory floor. They contribute to the strategy employed by the military and the police force and, on a more general level, they permeate the everyday consciousness of millions through their distribution as "pop psychology" via the media.²

In our apartheid society, with its blatant political and

¹ A great deal of the psychology practised in Africa, South America, and even Europe and the Soviet Union, has its origins in this Anglo-American orthodoxy and is equally problematic.

² We are indebted for much of the terminology used here to Adlam, et. al, 1977.

ideological controls, and its obvious economic exploitation, the question as to whose interests mainstream psychology serves cannot be long in coming. In general terms, there is no specific instance of psychological practice that has escaped this kind of critical scrutiny (although the specific relationships to apartheid are yet to be explored adequately). We would like, at this point, to take up a few of the more important areas of critique, namely the practices of clinical psychology, psychology in industry and educational psychology, as well as the nature of theoretical production in psychology.

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Our clients ask ... the same question: is there something wrong with them, or is there something wrong with the world around them? And with few exceptions, psychologists tell them that there is something wrong with them and nothing wrong with the world. We usually ignore the possibility of structural social problems ... we are taking a significant political stand.

(Beit-Hallahmi, 1974, p. 125)

✓ Beit-Hallahmi's attack on clinical psychology needs to be taken seriously. Traditional approaches to clinical practice do tend to view mental suffering as a failure on the part of an individual to adapt, rather than critically considering the social reality into which that person is drawn. As a result, the extremely complex relationship of the individual to society remains unquestioned and unexamined by either therapist or "client".

Psychotherapy, which emerged as a significant force in the present epoch of individualism, represents an attempt to

intervene in human misery at the level of the individual. While there is no doubt that it has, when properly conceived, the potential to be a liberating force for the individual, all "systems of therapy that operate within the individualistic paradigm, [are] of necessity a conservative social force" (Lichtman, 1982, p. 93 - our emphasis).

More recent formulations of psychotherapy, which venture beyond the individual, tend to limit their analysis to the level of the family. In so doing, they fail to acknowledge the family's role as a mediating institution for the wider social structure, reflecting and expressing the conflicts which inhere in it.

But psychologists ignore social forces at their peril.

Psychological disturbance is not randomly distributed in the South African population, and it must be one of the tasks of a progressive approach to examine the social influences on the incidence and severity of mental disturbance in our people. The effects of exploitative interpersonal relations and other forms of social oppression (including that of women) need to be examined with regard to the production and prevalence of pathology.

In failing to take seriously the social determination of individuals, psychotherapy has become, in the words of Joel Kovel, "the heroin of late capitalism" (1977). It takes the form of a one-to-one transaction (whether in individual, family or group therapy) which serves to mask the important social determinants of human functioning. Psychological disturbance, rather than being viewed as the outcome of social ills, is attributed to individual "weakness" or disease. Happiness comes

to be a commodity which one purchases rather than a condition of social life.

In South Africa, psychotherapy is still very much located within this conservative-conformist paradigm. It is compounded by the fact that in practice, if not in theory, therapeutic services are aimed at specific racial and class groups. For example, while white patients in institutions receive a combination of psychotherapy, chemotherapy and psychiatric rehabilitation, black patients, by and large, receive only custodial care and chemotherapy (WHO, 1977). The fact that there are significantly few black clinicians (either psychiatrists or psychologists)³, and a large number of people requiring mental health services, means that these services are almost exclusively devoted to custodianship.

Custodial care has been the target of numerous attacks. Prominent amongst these have been the criticisms of institutionalisation put forward by Szasz, Foucault, Goffman and Scheff, who have pointed to the repressive nature of commitment.⁴ Alternative styles of dealing with mental health issues which have been incorporated into community processes⁵, have clearly demonstrated the ability of communities to absorb people having a wide range of emotional problems, in a way which is of benefit to both the individual and the community. However, this form of collective therapeutic endeavour is contrary to the competitive individualism which characterises capitalist society, and as such, represents a

³ The issue is not so much one of race as one of language.

⁴ On these critiques see Sedgwick (1982) and Brown (1973).

⁵ For examples of such projects in Italy and China, see Francescato & Jones (1973) and Lu (1978).

fundamental challenge to mainstream psychology.

This is not to say that all forms of psychotherapy should be eliminated. The alleviation of individual suffering generated by our present social existence must be provided - in Russell Jacoby's words, "band-aids" are necessary (1975). On another level, there are obviously a number of techniques which hold some hope for those aiming at a progressive psychotherapeutic practice. But no matter what we do as psychotherapists, we must of necessity ground ourselves in a thorough understanding of the interrelations between psychological functioning and social reality.

PSYCHOLOGY IN INDUSTRY

Of the specific instances of the relationship between psychology and political practice, the one that has perhaps been most critically examined in the South African context is industrial psychology. One is tempted to follow the lead given by Nick Heather and get on to those areas of psychology which are more compatible with a critical practice:

The subject of the political function of industrial psychology need not take up much of our precious space. Industrial psychology always serves the interests of management and is invariably calculated in the long run to increase profits. The reader should not be conned into believing otherwise.

(Heather, 1976, p. 103).

The field of labour relations, however, needs to be analysed very carefully, especially in the light of the tendency toward reform in the overall South African political context. As Saul and Gelb (1981) point out, the crisis facing South Africa is "organic",

that is, it is so deeply part of the overall social structure that "political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making efforts to cure them within certain limits, and to overcome them" (p. 3, quoting Gramsci). With the emergence of an increasingly militant trade union movement on South Africa's agenda in the late 1970s and 1980s, management is being forced into precisely this kind of formative response to the crisis on the factory floor.

In an article which lays bare the political role that psychology has come to play in industry, Bosquet (1980) points out that management cannot continue to run a factory by intimidation and repression indefinitely. He traces the development of "human relations in industry" in the USA in the 1930s, and shows that industrial psychology emerged as a powerful branch of the psychological establishment precisely because of the huge demand for a behavioural technology which would deflect conflict between management and workers, while maintaining the economic exploitation of workers on which the profit margin was built.

It is no accident that the field of industrial relations has become such a huge South African growth industry since the mid-1970s. In February 1973, an estimated 100 000 workers came out on strike in Durban and worker militancy has increasingly and constructively been channelled through a number of progressive trade union groupings since then. The 1970s also witnessed a massive wave of political unrest in working-class communities which, as it becomes more organised and politically self-conscious, threatens to destroy the economic and political bases of apartheid and, hence, the profitability constraints faced by South African capitalism. As Webster (1980) demonstrates, "it

is in the context of the structural transformation of the economy (in particular, or new demand for semi-skilled black labourers) and growing working-class organisation, that social research into industry grew in the late 1960s and 1970s" (p. 10). We see management turning more and more to the industrial psychologist to defuse the situation and to foster the illusion in the minds of workers that the factory is a happy, co-operative enterprise with their interests at heart.

This is not to say that industrial psychology is party to a conspiracy. It portrays the industrial arena as politically "innocent" and, consequently, operates to resolve certain "human conflicts", but this ideological bias is often motivated by a profound humanistic concern for all in the workplace. However, it is this problematic "innocent humanism" which characterises most industrial psychology teaching and research in South Africa that needs to be subjected to a rigorous social and structural criticism.

In concluding this section, allow us a lengthy quote from Nick Heather's book, which captures quite nicely the ultimate political allegiance of mainstream industrial psychology, and possibly points to the direction in which an emancipatory industrial psychology might move:

The simple point is, of course, that in a capitalist society the interests of workers and management are, by definition, irreconcilable, since the essence of capitalism is the exploitation of the worker's labour by the owner of capital. The ideology of the new 'humanistic' industrial psychology is a trick to persuade the worker into thinking that this conflict of class interests does not exist. When we hear industrial psychologists advocate the overthrow of

capitalism, we may take their work and views more seriously.

(1976, p. 104).

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

With the publication of the De Lange Report⁶ in late 1981, education has come to the forefront of public debate in South Africa. A great deal of concern has been focussed on the role of education in the maintenance of the social relations of apartheid (i.e., the present status quo), and it is against this background that educational psychology must be critically examined.

Significantly, De Lange's recommendations place emphasis on the need to move to a meritocratic justification for the provision of education in South Africa. However, the maintenance of the economic and political bases of apartheid, which is in fact one of the starting points of the report, means that this shift can have no more than an ideological implication - school will still be "a massive indoctrination device for delivering, bound and gagged, the dependable producers and consumers upon which the technological society relies" (Heather, 1976, p. 108).

The meritocratic trend in educational thinking is of crucial importance for educational psychologists. Two of their most important functions - testing and counselling - are central to the workings of the educational system envisaged by De Lange. Psychometric testing and vocational guidance will provide mechanisms through which any individual is allocated to a place

⁶ See HSRC (1981). Although not officially titled the De Lange Report, we will refer to it as such in accordance with common usage in educational circles.

in the social division of labour and will give a "scientific" flavour to the ideology of individual merit. However, as we will go on to argue, this very process will serve to conceal the political role that educational psychology plays in determining individual abilities.

Although controversy rages over various issues in psychometric circles (e.g., the contribution of the environment, culture-fair versus culture-free testing, compensatory education, etc.), the value of testing per se remains largely unquestioned. The tendency is towards acceptance of an operational definition of intellect or ability, so that the contribution which IQ testing makes to maintaining systems of social relations and social control is deflected and diverted. Consequently, in South Africa we are faced with the introduction of "canalization": the mechanism whereby children will be streamed into various forms of education on the basis of academic achievement:

This achievement will be assessed by various tests. These tests are supposed to measure 'inborn mental abilities' and a child's ability to gain from education is supposed to depend on the amount of intelligence he or she possesses. ... [but] the child's ability to answer these tests depends on the extent to which he or she has been brought up in the same intellectual and cultural traditions as the people who draw them up. For example, middle class children receive books and expensive conceptual toys at an early age. They are therefore able to develop this part of their abilities at a far younger age than working class children. Black and white poorer children do not have expensive toys and books and so do not develop 'book IQs' and 'toy IQs'. It is this knowledge that psychometric tests presuppose in measuring ability. Consequently working class children find these tests difficult to cope with while middle class kids enjoy an advantage.

(NEUSA, 1982, p. 9)

NEUSA goes on to argue that the obvious outcome of this is the perpetuation of the

myth that working class children are 'stupid' and lack ability. This myth is used to justify the fact that they do not continue with an academic education but are channeled into technical or mechanical learning, which, it is claimed, they are more suited for.

(Ibid., p. 9)

It does not take much imagination to see why De Lange has placed so much emphasis on school guidance: the role of the school psychologist will be to provide support for the overall canalization procedures on the level of personal contact with children.

On another level, humanistic psychology has come to inform the notion of teaching without force, which has come to dominate 'liberal' education. In a sense the disciplining rod has been replaced by psychological guilt: the child who does not do well academically or behaves "badly" in class, is confronted with his or her own lack of self-control by disappointed parents and teachers. The central role that this type of "anonymous authority" has come to play is evident in the focus of psychology courses such as behaviour modification and social learning theory, which emphasise self-control and self-reinforcement programmes. In this way, educational inequality comes to be viewed as the result of the child's own failure and not the failure of the educational and socio-political systems. Notions of self-determination and self-control lend support to the De Lange Report's call for distinguishing between children on the grounds of supposed differences in "individual merit".

Mainstream psychology's collaboration in this has been, in Eysenck's view, the

development of those instruments and techniques required by a society which aspires to capitalize the fullest upon the fact that most men are created unequal.

(Eysenck, 1953, p. 310, quoting Horst)

It would seem that educational psychologists, like all their colleagues in South Africa, are faced with, and are making, significant political decisions in their everyday work.

THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

We have briefly examined some issues which challenge the forms of practice associated with mainstream psychology. This section takes up a deeper level on which psychology fits the description "conformist", one which allows us to examine more directly the theoretical issues involved in the theory-practice dialectic. Sedgwick (1974) characterises the main features of the "scientific" discourse of psychological research: "it deals with problems arising from observations that a suitably trained researcher may make in relation to a discrete subject, or to a plurality of such subjects ... within conditions designed to reduce error" (p. 30). Underlying this conception of research methodology is the epistemological orthodoxy which establishment psychologists cling to, namely positivism, which seeks to apply the methods and principles of the natural sciences to the domain of the human sciences.⁷

⁷ In fact, we may be doing an injustice to the practitioners of the natural sciences here. It is true that research psychology initially modelled itself on 19th century physics, but theoretical physics underwent revolutionary changes in the

The major tenets of positivist theory can be captured in three principles: that facts exist outside of the investigator and independently of the experience of the investigator; that theory consists of scientific laws which make sense of those facts; and that theories can only make sense if they are open to objective verification (or falsification, to use Popper's more sophisticated concept) with regard to those facts. Anyone trained in a South African psychology department will be familiar with the terms of reference of this orthodoxy: they are captured in notions like "psychological experimentation" and "the control and prediction of behaviour".⁸

Now positivist theory has come under severe attack as a false theory of knowledge. We cannot here go into the details of this epistemological critique, although it raises important questions for, and ultimately challenges, the legitimacy of traditionally-conceived experimental psychology. Suffice to say that Berlin has captured the general philosophical outlook on the increasing constraints imposed by positivist theory on the development of knowledge in the twentieth century:

The history of thought and culture is, as Hegel showed with great brilliance, a changing pattern of great liberating ideas

early part of this century with Max Planck's Quantum Theory and Einstein's Special and General Theories of Relativity. There is a great deal of debate about whether or not theoretical physics moved beyond the strictures of positivism, or indeed, whether or not such strictures apply equally to the natural and social sciences. Ironically, psychology has lost touch with developments in the natural sciences in its very claim that it models itself on the methods of the natural sciences.

⁸ Sadly, this familiarity is usually uncritical and uninformed, a product of the manner in which psychology is often taught in our departments. Nevertheless, the degree of critical familiarity with psychology is increasing as more students and teachers of psychology begin to take epistemology and the philosophy of science seriously.

which inevitably turn into suffocating straightjackets.

(Quoted by Bernstein, 1976, p. 57)

Much more important, from our point of view, is the political function implicit in this conception of knowledge:

... the social function which determines the spirit of enquiry in psychology - whatever convictions psychologists may have about it - is the maintenance of the status quo: psychology borrows habits of thought from natural science and applies them to the human sphere in a manner which is logically quite inappropriate, but politically highly functional.

(Ingleby, 1976, p. 152)

The point that Ingleby is raising here, of course, is that positivism is implicated in forms of political practice which are eminently suited for the control of human beings, and in so doing, legitimates, on the level of epistemology and methodology, the political functions of psychology which we discussed earlier. We can see this in the "scientific" laws which experimental psychology generates, which also demonstrate that it rests on a false theory of its own object of study.

The experimental method requires the researcher to isolate and in some way quantify discrete variables which can form the terms making up an hypothesis. Only in this way can psychology establish the "general laws" which relate discrete independent variables to dependent variables, and so conform to its image of itself as one of the natural sciences. However, the notion that one can isolate and measure aspects of a person's psychological reality is misconceived:

... the focus on discrete variables fails to recognise the complex nature of social

and economic determinism in the construction of the consciousness of human beings. The separation of aspects of a person's reality from one another, implied by the need to observe and measure independent variables, denies the complexity of that reality.

(Moll, 1982, p. 188)

As Freud has pointed out, a person's reality is overdetermined, and it is impossible to predict in a unidimensional "general law" what the consciousness and activity of any human being will be.

At the same time, we must recognise that the unidimensionality which characterises positivism is, in some sense, an accurate account of what a large proportion of people have come to look like. The difficulty is with confusing the present historical socialisation of people under exploitative social relations (as pertain in South Africa) with the "nature" of human experiences and consciousness. In this way, the unidimensionality of positivism and its resultant account of human individuality, is a mirror of the unidimensionality of people in present capitalist societies.⁹ In short, it is one thing to accurately account for what socialisation does to people in different societies, and another to align this with the essential "nature" of human consciousness.

Nevertheless, despite the pseudo-scientific laws established by psychologists failing to shed any light on the object of study of psychology, what they can do is to provide the basis for a technology of behaviour control: according to general rules

⁹ This naturalising glorification of the individual under capitalism has been challenged by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and 1940s, and again more recently by writers like Lasch and Jacoby in America, in an attempt to free people from oppressive social relations.

established by researchers, pertinent "independent variables" can be manipulated to bring about defined behavioural goals. Herein lies the political function of the experimental method. In conclusion, let it be said that mainstream psychology in South Africa is far from moving away from this orthodox (and false) conception of science. There is a tendency to glibly equate research with doing experiments, and science with experimentation, so that an area of huge epistemological controversy is brushed aside in the promotion of the "pursuit of psychology as a science" (PASA, 1982). The positivist image haunts South African psychology.

PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY

The preceding discussion has covered the major problem areas which constitute a crisis for South African psychology, although it is by no means exhaustive. It is also necessarily sketchy, and a great deal of careful analysis and debate must take place before the issues can be resolved.

The editorial should not, therefore, be seen as an exhaustive policy statement, but rather as an attempt to demarcate a series of critical concerns for the journal to take up in the future. We would welcome contributions which criticise positions taken in the editorial, as well as contributions which develop further the positive directions we have suggested.

We hope that Psychology in Society will provide a forum for the publication of papers, especially of an exploratory nature, for polemic, discussion and debate. We believe it is important for writers to "take stabs" at particular problems and would like to

see the journal providing an opportunity for this kind of preliminary sorting and debate.

A crucial implication of our position is that we cannot view the theory and practice of psychology in isolation from society as a whole. For this reason, Psychology in Society should not be viewed as a specifically parochial psychology journal, but rather as an engagement with the psychological realm. Our concern with substantive criticisms of psychology in South Africa at this particular conjuncture, makes it relevant for us to accept contributions from many different fields - such as psychology, education, cultural studies, anthropology, history, the women's movement and sociology.

The following are the kinds of issues we would like to see taken up in the journal:

- * Critiques of mainstream South African psychology - not simply reactively, but in order to work for a substantive, progressive psychological practice.
- * Critical examinations of major theoretical positions which inform psychology.
- * The historical development of psychology, especially in South Africa. We would like to see substantive, specific historical analyses, rather than the global "histories" which dominate the teaching of psychology.
- * The relationship between personality and society, including important debates on human nature and human essence.
- * Methodology in psychological research. The crisis of positivism and technicism in mainstream psychology is crucial here.

- * The idea of a profession in psychology and its problematic relationship to South Africa.
- * Ideological practices in society, especially with regard to race, class and the position of women, and their relationship to psychology.

THIS FIRST ISSUE

The foundation edition of Psychology in Society contains two articles which deal in different ways with the limitations of mainstream psychological research in this country, and a review of an important recent book on the history of psychology.

Michael Savage documents numerous instances of direct and indirect political manipulation of research in the social sciences in this country. He gives important weight to the increasing claims that South African social research has more and more become the simple legitimator of the mainstream practices of apartheid. While particular details which he refers to might well have been transformed in the immediate past - and we would welcome responses in this regard - there seems to be no reason to believe that the overall picture of the manipulation and shaping of social research for political ends has changed. For psychologists and other social scientists, the implications are both severe and challenging.

The second article argues that mainstream positivist psychology is powerful more because of its ideological and technological role in maintaining existing social relations, than because its practitioners are firmly based in an understanding of their own epistemologies. Ian Moll develops a critique of the manner in

which psychology is taught in the universities, and shows that the poverty of the teaching of psychology is but part of the overall poverty of mainstream theory and practice in psychology.

Finally, Janet Simson sketches the importance of Jacoby's perceptive, and polemical, critique of conformist psychology, Social Amnesia. There can be no doubt that this book should be read by every student and practitioner of psychology, and Simson goes a long way towards telling us why.

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Constraints on research in sociology and psychology in South Africa. *

MICHAEL SAVAGE

University of Cape Town

Social research is never conducted in a political vacuum: the structures, tensions and values of a society condition and are reflected in the type of social research that is produced within it. In South Africa an authoritarian political system and a deeply divided social structure have interacted with one another to create a climate which is inhospitable to free-ranging social inquiry. A growing battery of informal and legal restraints have emerged to circumscribe freedom of enquiry and are ensuring that certain topics remain "off-limits" to all but the boldest or most foolhardy of researchers. The restraints that the society has placed on academic research and analysis are severe and frequently make it easier for free-ranging analysis and research into South African society to occur outside of the country, where access to books and periodicals is not limited by censorship and where open debate from all viewpoints is possible. Yet in what follows it will not be claimed that severe internal restraints alone are responsible for the apparent reluctance on the part of most researchers to take on the analysis, in their writing and teaching, of many of the most socially relevant and historically significant questions about South African society. Social scientists, like other members of this society, are limited and restricted by the norms, values and socially determined perceptions of the South African social structure, with the result that such questions often do not even occur to

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them. Too few of them are able, or have been trained, to stand "outside" their own linguistic or ethnic setting to examine the causes of the development and underdevelopment of their own society, its inner tendencies and the forces within it that may lead to its transformation. In short, constraints on social research in South Africa spring both from the authoritarian nature of the society and from the "trained incapacity and professional psychosis" of many social scientists working within South Africa.¹

The purpose of this paper is to consider some of these themes and to consider particularly the place of sociological research, with some small reference to psychological research, in the contemporary South African setting. It should be noted at the outset that the inherited academic division of labour that has been drawn between different social science "disciplines" is regarded as being largely unimportant, except in limiting the vision of individual writers. The constraints facing psychological or sociological research hardly differ from those facing economic, historical or political research: limitations that hinder free inquiry in the field of agricultural economics also hinder the work of sociologists concerned with farm labour, and constraints placed on the study of jurisprudence similarly limit criminological research. It will be necessary to march freely across disciplinary boundaries to examine these restraints for no social science discipline is unaffected by restraints placed on the liberty of one of them. It is both artificial and dangerously misleading to consider the impediments to research

¹ The phrase is Maurice Zeitlin's in the introduction to his book American Society Inc. (1970; p.x)

faced only by single disciplines and such a focus encourages a fragmented and myopic view of the climate conditioning social research in South Africa.

In what follows the limitations to freedom of inquiry in the social sciences deriving from their place and organisation in South African society will first be examined; then specific agencies which exert pressure on or control social research will be considered, and, finally, the cumulative impact of these restraints and the function of sociological and psychological research will be discussed.

SOCIAL RESEARCH AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The majority of social research within South Africa occurs within its sixteen universities. In quantitative terms such research far exceeds the amount of research produced by State sponsored bodies, such as the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) or the National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR), or by autonomous research institutes. South African universities through their training of sociologists and psychologists and through their support of research workers, profoundly influence the quality and type of social research that is produced.

The South African university system mirrors the deep cleavages and inequalities of the society and is moulded around its pattern of racial and ethnic segregation. There is little doubt that these universities have helped to harden and even legitimate these cleavages (Welsh & Savage, 1977). Afrikaans language universities, through the values they espouse and through their practical activities, have contributed to the shaping and implementation of apartheid. Black universities, established

despite resistance to segregated education and generally manned by graduates of Afrikaans universities, have come to be one of the rallying points of African nationalism and of black resistance to white domination. While the English speaking universities have come to occupy an uneasy middle position. Not only do universities reflect the ethnic and colour divisions of the society, they reflect its inequalities. White South Africa has some 230 university students per 10 thousand of the population (a figure only exceeded by the United States); the African population has 4.4 students per 10 thousand of its population at universities (Orkin, et al, 1979). In terms of capital expenditure, some R36.7 million was spent directly on "white" universities and some R8.7 million on black universities in the financial year 1976/77 (Gordon, et al, 1979).

Against this background it is unsurprising both that the type of training of social researchers reflects the divisions in the society and differs according to the university setting in which it takes place, and that the white population provides all but a few of the trained sociologists and psychologists. In short, the socialisation and allocation functions that are carried out by any university in South Africa are given an extreme racial twist (Budlender, 1978).

Turning first to the syllabuses of university courses in Sociology: the teaching of research techniques and methodology has a very high priority with some three-quarters of all universities teaching in this politically neutral area over the whole three years of a first degree (Anonymous, 1978). In contrast, the teaching of theory appears to be de-emphasised and a conservative brand of it dominates most syllabuses. In

Afrikaans language and black universities, theory courses are structural-functional, consensus orientated and American in their general approach. One commentator has noted that this dominant framework

"... fits the white South African mind well, emphasising order, equilibrium, gradual evolutionary change - all watch-words of white South African politics. Two consequences flow from this: theory is predominantly contemporary but the more recent theoretical debates are also ignored. Sociology before Parsons is restricted to Durkheim, Weber, and occasionally Comte; sociology after Parsons seems not to exist."

(Ibid, p.7)

In addition, syllabuses are characterised by offering several courses in applied sociology, which have a heavy meliorative emphasis, being focused on social problems encountered by people in the adjustment to industrial capitalism - poverty, housing, migrancy, and so forth. This emphasis not only reflects the expectations of the largest single group of sociology students - those training for a career in social work - but helps narrow the intellectual climate by stressing an approach which focuses on, to use Peterson's (1976) terms, "the engineering of solutions rather than the clinical examination of problems in their larger context" (p.37). While research methods, conservative theory and applied sociology dominate university sociology syllabuses, there are some universities in which bold and innovative efforts to teach Marxism and to call into question the nature of the South African political economy are taking place. However, these efforts are both small in number and hampered by the political harassment of the university staff who teach them as well as by the system of censorship which excludes the use of many key works necessary for the adequate teaching of such

courses. Unsurprisingly, a 1973 questionnaire survey of final year sociology students found that Afrikaans students were least critical of their curriculum and black students most critical, levelling most of their criticism at courses in theory and research methods (Hare & Savage, 1979).

What is apparent is that within the teaching of sociology, the debate on the critical issues facing South Africa is too often blunted, or even avoided, and that the particularly contentious, or sensitive, areas of the society are often only marginally examined, where they are examined at all. This can be illustrated in various fields. In Sociology, there is no single South African university that offers a distinct year-long course devoted to the study of race and ethnic relations; instead this important field is left to be subsumed as one among other component parts of a variety of courses in the social sciences. Similarly in the teaching of Industrial Sociology the overwhelming emphasis is on training students to become "servants of power" and offering managerial insights into the problems of industrial organisation. In Political Sociology, as in Political Science, it is the exception rather than the rule that any detailed or empirical analysis of the South African political system is presented in the classroom. Similarly such sociologically (and economically) important but sensitive topics as income and wealth distribution, trade unions and labour organisations and patterns of corporate ownership and control are all but avoided, in part because so little research has been conducted in these areas. It should be emphasised that the avoidance or near avoidance of such sensitive areas in sociology finds support in the organisation of syllabuses in other subjects.

In Psychology no deep study of the psychology of racism and of the stresses it inflicts on individuals is offered by any South African university. In English, there is only a miniscule amount of critical analysis and rigorous scholarship concerned with local literature and a compulsory acquaintance with the writing of black South Africans is rarely insisted upon. In History, only one university runs a distinct year-long course in African history. In Law, no university departments travel far in their teaching in the complex areas of the analysis of contemporary judicial decision-making nor do they searchingly examine current security legislation. In Medicine, little emphasis is given to community and preventative medicine nor to the relationship between the existing political and health structures of South Africa.

This listing could be enlarged to indicate that it is more usual than not for controversy and vigorous and deep-probing analysis and debate of South Africa's problems to be blunted in the classroom. One reflection of this is found in students' ignorance about the basic operations of their society. In a social awareness questionnaire administered at two English language universities to large classes of first year sociology students in 1975: 88 percent of these students were unable to identify to the nearest three million the number of Africans in South Africa and most grossly overestimated the number of Jews in the population, half wrongly believed that without official permission it is not permissible for a white to entertain an African to dinner, and half wrongly believed that the country has an official religion, namely Protestantism (Savage & Wiendieck, 1975).

The bias of syllabuses and the "self-restraints" reflected within them are reinforced by a variety of political pressures. Censorship prevents a wide range of important published works from being used, bannings have silenced critical and outspoken teachers as well as research workers, and specific legislation either prevents or limits free discussion in the classroom of such topics as disinvestment, conscientious objection, marxism, African nationalism, judicial behaviour and drug usage. Less formal pressures have also been brought to bear on students and teachers: people within the university have been employed by the security police to spy on their colleagues, classroom discussions on sensitive issues have been complained about to university and public authorities and political pressures have been brought to bear to influence both appointments and promotion of staff.

It is against this background that the training of social research workers takes place and it is unsurprising that it profoundly influences the bulk of sociological and psychological research work produced in South Africa. The type of training sociological research workers in South Africa acts as a major constraint on their ability to grapple with fundamentally important questions about the nature of South African society. Pollack (1968) has argued that

"Despite the commendable amount of sociological research undertaken by South African sociologists it can scarcely be claimed that much of it is of a fundamental nature ... In relation to their numbers and volume of their research, sociologists in South Africa have not made substantial contributions to the analysis of economic, political and social aspects of inter-group relations, nor on the attitudes regarding the different races on policies and practices in the field of race

relations in South Africa."

(p. 258)

Her comments are borne out by the recently published Bibliography of South African Sociology (1978) which provides a relatively comprehensive list of all sociological writings up to 1975. The largest section of this bibliography is that dealing with "Race and Ethnic Group Relations" but an examination of it reveals that many of the items cited are not by sociologists, and those that are form only muted and tangential comments on race relations. An over-concentration on the study of white social attitudes is evident, together with a corresponding de-emphasis on black and structural studies of racism. The next largest section in the bibliography is devoted to "Social Problems" with most of the items cited being written from a social welfare perspective and not containing critical analyses of the relationship between the South African social structure and the "social problems" being investigated. The third largest section lists research undertaken within the general field of industrial sociology with most of these writings having a "problem-solving" orientation and few of them touching upon an examination of capitalism and its ideology in South Africa.

Many of these emphases are accounted for by the small number of trained black research workers, who could bring to an examination of research problems (and also to the choice of problems for research) radically different experiences and perspectives from those of the white researcher. The dearth of black research workers, which is mirrored in the enrollment of a mere 23 post-graduate students in sociology in black universities in 1978, forms a crippling handicap to the development of social research

dealing with the crucial social and political issues confronting Southern Africa. The cognitive conservatism of most research and its failure to deal with fundamentally important issues, in great measure, is a direct result of the numerical domination of whites of the research process. The few black social researchers that have operated within South Africa - such as Fatima Meer, Archie Mafeje, Noel Manganyi, Nimrod Mkele - have made amongst the most important contributions to South African social science. However, their criticisms and probings of the society have generally not been welcomed and some, such as Meer, have been banned; others have been severely harassed and many have left the country, having found it impossible to operate as scholars within it. It is doubtful that the position of the black researcher in the research process will change in the near future, as many politically aware blacks refuse to enrol in segregated universities, and those that do, and are students of the social sciences, are exposed to teachers who predominantly are graduates of Afrikaans universities and reflect in their teaching the biases of their own training. Above all, the political climate remains overtly hostile to any black probing into the operations of South African society.

Apart from the universities, the other major institution directly affecting social research is the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The HSRC, which was founded in 1969, is the major state agency for funding and conducting research and contains ten research units including: the Institute for Sociological, Demographic and Criminological Research. The bulk of its finance is derived from a direct government subsidy, which in 1976/7 amounted to R4.3 million, a figure which should be contrasted to the R30 million government subsidy granted to

its sister organisation, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) (Hare & Savage, 1979). The HSRC in 1976/7 employed some 214 full-time research workers and some 80 percent of its research money is spent on supporting its own research. The organisation is governed by a council of ten members, all white, who are appointed by the Minister of National Education, who is in charge of white education. The attitude of the HSRC to social research is set out in its first annual report, which stated:

"In the Republic, however, social sciences research is not a dogma superimposed from above as an instrument of national policy; and the aim of the HSRC is to encourage and stimulate research in the social sciences by free and independent scholars whose labours, it is hoped, will lead to a fuller satisfaction of the needs and aspirations of the various peoples in our country."

(HSRC, 1970)

It is difficult to assess whether, over the years of its existence, the HSRC has fostered the growth of "free and independent scholars". On the one hand, the organisation has supported independent research into some sensitive areas and provided grants to some cognitively radical social scientists. But, at the same time, the HSRC is seen as being a conservative government agency operating within the confines of government policy. No blacks serve on any of its 11 controlling committees, which are all dominated by academics drawn from conservative Afrikaans language institutions. Its publications too are marked by a deep conservatism and, at times, an overt commitment to apartheid. One indication of this is found in the April 1978 Newsletter of the HSRC reporting on the initiation of HSRC research into mentally gifted schoolchildren. After a preamble, the Newsletter states in italics

"... an exceptional intellect can only be utilised to the optimal benefit of society if its possessor has learnt to deal with people, is guided by a Christian National philosophy of life, has a balanced outlook as regards his sense of values and is endowed with wisdom that is based on moral and ethical grounds."

(HSRC, 1978; italics added)

Such a statement from the HSRC indicates that those not holding to the government created and approved "Christian National" philosophy, that is, opponents of the government and non-Christians, cannot contribute to the "optimal benefit of society". An examination of HSRC publications shows that few of them deal with important or sensitive issues and the majority of them are pedestrian documents concerned with such topics as the adaptation of Czechoslovakian immigrants into Pretoria, church attendance, the use of tobacco and alcohol in the South African population and worker absenteeism. As Welsh (1975) points out, it is clear that its own research workers operate within the framework of government policy but what is unable to be demonstrated is whether, in allocating research money to those working outside of the HSRC, it systematically favours research projects that do not impinge upon controversial areas. Until recently, the HSRC refused scholars permission to publish any "interim" report on research undertaken with HSRC funds unless they had obtained the Council's permission to do so and scholars had to submit a final research report "acceptable" to the HSRC. This position has led the HSRC to telegraphing a political scientist at a conference refusing her permission to deliver her prepared paper. The "acceptability" ruling for final reports has also led to uniquely South African situations: HSRC readers have been known to recommend that research reports not be accepted as they have quoted from banned publications or set the policy of apartheid

in a bad light.²

The other major agency controlling non-university research is the National Institute for Personnel Research (NIPR), whose chief emphasis is on research into industrial psychology. In this broad area it has undertaken a considerable amount of research for the Defence Force, State departments and for private industry. The work of the NIPR is marked by a high standard of technical competence and by a problem-solving orientation. Inevitably reflected in this work are many of the tensions of a divided society, particularly as found in the workplace. NIPR research reports, while detailing many of these tensions, attempt generally to steer clear of potentially controversial comment on them and instead emphasize the empirical and technical details of the research. The organisation has not always managed to avoid political controversy. At one stage, the Defence Force broke off its relationship with the NIPR for reasons never made public. Also, one of its research projects involved testing the I.Q. levels of a sample of members of different population groups. The result of this research revealed the Afrikaaner group in the sample to have the lowest average I.Q. Considerable pressure was said to have been put on the Director of the NIPR not to allow the results of this research project to be published. The Director refused to interfere with the publication of this research and later a critique of the project was published by one member of the NIPR staff.

In addition to sociological and social research being conducted

² The HSRC has now modified its position and interim reports may be published without reference to it as long as no reference is made to the HSRC as having supported the research.

by university departments and State funded institutions, there are a range of autonomous institutions which conduct research (such as the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Africa Institute) as well as a considerable number of research institutes attached to universities (see HSRC, 1972). Many of these research bodies have produced important and fundamental research into sensitive and controversial areas and, as discussed later, have been attacked for doing so. Recently, the Department of Information "scandal" involving the multi-million rand use of public funds for secret projects to buy favourable publicity for apartheid, has revealed that some of the secret projects involved the financing of three university research institutes - the Institute for the Study of Plural Societies at the University of Pretoria, the Institute for Strategic Studies also at the University of Pretoria and the Centre for International Politics at the University of Potchefstroom. Of these three institutes, the Institute for the Study of Plural Societies has been particularly active. It was headed by a sociologist, Professor Nic Rhodie, and claimed independence while secretly receiving R100 thousand a year to do research and organise conferences. To hide its true nature, top South African businessmen, such as Iscor's Dr T Muller and Volkskas Bank's Dr Jan Hurter, became ghost donors to the Institute, with the Department of Information paying for their contributions. The Institute has run conferences both in South Africa and New York which sociologists such as Talcott Parsons and Heribert Adam have attended. The "secret" financing gives rise to the possibility that other secret money is being used to consciously subvert "free and independent" sociological research.

This section, with its emphasis on the institutional setting in

which sociological and psychological research occurs, has attempted to sketch out the power of institutional conservatism in influencing the research process. Who is it who is selected to be trained as a social researcher, the biases and emphases in what is taught and the organisational framework of social research are as significant in shaping social research in South Africa as the direct constraints placed on research by the State and by community agencies.

AGENCIES OF RESTRAINT

A large number of different groups and agencies directly restrain freedom of social inquiry, and particularly inquiry into the "sensitive" areas of South African society. Laws prevent whites from going into urban black townships or African rural areas without official permits; access to mine compounds, which are "private property", requires permission as does entry on to white farms. Bans prevent access to key informants and restrict mobility for interviews. Censorship has meant that a large range of essential literature is unavailable to South African sociologists and psychologists. Research workers have been harassed by police; some scholars have been prosecuted for publishing their work or possessing the published work of others. Community groups and voluntary organisations have placed pressure on researchers and prevented them from gaining access to important material. This partial list of constraints is best probed by first considering some illustrations of the pressures by the State that individual social researchers have encountered during their work.

One of the clearest illustrations of pressure being brought to

bear on a researcher occurred in 1970 when a scholar was prosecuted for having published his research findings. Barend van Niekerk, a law professor, published two articles in the South African Law Journal in which he gave an overview of the situation in South Africa as regards capital punishment (van Niekerk, 1969, 1970). In these articles he included the results of a questionnaire that he had distributed to all practicing advocates about their views and experiences concerning the death penalty. The questionnaire contained two questions about possible racial discrimination in the administration of justice. The one question being "Do you consider, for whatever reason, that a non-European tried on a capital charge stands a better chance for being sentenced to death than a European?". The other question asked "If your answer was 'Yes' (to the previous question) do you think the differentiation shown to the different races as regards the death penalty is conscious and deliberate?". In his published articles van Niekerk reproduced these two questions and commented:

"Whatever conclusions one may draw from the results of these two questions, the fact which emerges undeniably is that a considerable number of replying advocates, almost 50 percent in fact, believe that justice as regards capital punishment is meted out on a differential basis to the different races, and that 41 percent who so believe are also of the opinion that such differentiation is 'conscious and deliberate'."

Van Niekerk was then charged with contempt of court by bringing the South African judiciary into contempt, violating their dignity and respect and casting suspicion on the administration of justice. During his trial no attempt was made to question or dispute the accuracy of his reported results, rather, central

to the charge and judgement, was the mere posing of the two questions. He was acquitted on the technicality that he had an absence of mens red, or intent to commit crime. But in giving judgement, the presiding judge indicated that, in his view, contempt had been committed. Consequently the trial clearly indicated the perils that any future scholars might face if they were to investigate closely judicial behaviour and the social factor in sentencing policy. Van Niekerk later wrote that as long as the judgement in his case stands, there will be

"no further attempt in South Africa to devote scholarly attention to the racial factor in our administration of justice. Neither is there much likelihood (and this is more important as far as the newspapers are concerned) of robust comment about the possible influence of social factors in the administration of justice. It needs little argument to conclude that if the mere reporting of the results of an enquiry could lead to a prosecution ... there will be few people willing to take chances as regards the publication of more robust comments and criticism."

(van Niekerk, 1976, p. 46)

In the years that have elapsed since this case, no scholarly research or published article in South Africa, directly or indirectly, has dealt with questions of judicial behaviour and the administration of justice. The practical effect of the van Niekerk case has been to warn researchers that investigations into race and racial attitudes in the administration of justice, into judicial behaviour and sentencing policy, are essentially "off-limits" and are topics on which any researcher writes at his/her peril. As a consequence, as Dugard (1978) has commented, "most academic lawyers have therefore sought safety in the quiet waters of private and commercial law - like the

jurists of Imperial Rome and authoritarian Holland before them" (p. 301). Yet it is not only lawyers that this prosecution has affected - the sociologist interested in criminology, in issues of racial discrimination and the appointments and behaviour of judicial officers, is also affected by the implications of this judgement, as are research workers who may be concerned with examining aspects of the psychology of racism in public life.

Some of the warnings embodied in the van Niekerk case were underlined the following year when van Niekerk was again charged with contempt of court for having, in a public speech, criticised judges in their approach to the Terrorism Act. This time he was convicted. In 1975 also he was charged and convicted for having defamed the Minister of Justice in a newspaper interview by implying that racial discrimination had played a part in a Government decision to recommend clemency for a convicted white murderer but not to recommend it for a black murderer convicted for having taken part in the same crime.

Prior to the van Niekerk case another area, the examination of the administration of prisons, had essentially been declared "off-limits" to critical scrutiny. In 1968 the Rand Daily Mail editor and Benjamin Pogrund, one of the paper's journalists, had been prosecuted for publishing a series of articles on prison conditions. The Prison Act of 1959 makes it an offence to publish "any false information concerning the behaviour or experience in prison of any prisoner or concerning the administration of any prison ... without taking reasonable steps to verify such information." The onus of proof is on the accused and those charged in the Rand Daily Mail case were found guilty. The practical effect of the Act and of this prosecution is that

it is now impossible either to publish any adverse information about the administration of prisons or any probing analyses of conditions within them without immediately running the risk of prosecution. Since this prosecution, critical scrutiny of the prison system has ceased and no sociologist or psychologist, to my knowledge, has entered this potential minefield.³

A more recent case poses equally severe threats to social scientists. In 1978 a graduate student in psychology at Rhodes University undertook a study of the use of drugs among the students at the university. One report of this study appeared in the student newspaper and the report was subsequently picked up first by a conservative Afrikaans newspaper and then by the national press. As newspaper reports of the study spread countrywide they became more lurid and filled out with comment (some of the comments revealed South African white prejudices, for instance, a warden of a women's residence at the university was quoted as saying "Women students using drugs were easily identifiable by their abnormal interest in natives. They became over affectionate and flung their arms round natives."). One morning at 2 am. the student who had conducted the study was woken by police and taken for questioning. Police seized his research notes together with tape recordings of interviews he had made during his study. At the police station the student was told that he would be held for fourteen days of questioning, as is provided for under the Drugs Act, and that the period of detention would be renewed until such time as he identified his informants and the voices on the tape. The student identified these and was released. Subsequently several persons were

³ One lawyer comments "In practice the law now operates as an effective legal barrier to the publication of any adverse information about prison conditions."

arrested and charged under the Drugs Act. Such a case clearly raises difficult ethical issues for social scientists: chief of these being should social scientists working within South Africa undertake research on issues where it is likely that police may attempt to discover the identity of their informants? This case, together with other incidents where police have seized research material, or have imprisoned journalists for refusing to reveal their sources of information, point to the danger that social scientists face in collecting information on such socially sensitive topics as black political activities, prison conditions and individual deviant behaviour.

The dilemma facing social scientists as being damned as ineffective if they do not do research into sensitive areas or being considered foolhardy if by doing it they unwillingly expose their informants, or themselves, to harassment is a peculiar one demanding peculiar solutions. One Grahamstown sociologist, engaged in a survey of black workers, destroyed her sampling list after police had acted against the student studying drug usage and thus effectively prevented herself from reinterviewing any of her informants or later carrying out a follow-up study. Other sociologists, such as Pierre van den Berghe, report that they have adopted different solutions by publicly deceiving people as to the true nature of their research in the hope that this would shelter them and their informants from unwelcome attention (van den Berghe, 1967).

A comparable incident took place at the University of Cape Town during 1977, when an American graduate student was employed by a university research unit to investigate black South African's subjective experiences at work. As a foreigner it was thought

that black South Africans would talk to him more freely and easily about their perceptions of their work than they would to a white South African. A part of his research involved the tape recording of a series of interviews with black workers. It is probable that one topic emerging in these interviews concerned political organisations. After completing many interviews the researcher left the country hurriedly and very shortly afterwards police seized his tape recordings. Subsequently the police were approached for the return of these tapes as they were to form the basis for a forthcoming publication. After some months the tapes were returned to the research unit by the police and it was then discovered that they had been wiped clean, and important and irreplaceable research material due for publication had been lost.

The experience of sociological research material falling into the hands of police is not unusual. Several South African research workers have been "raided" by security police and had publications which are important for their research confiscated and files temporarily removed from them. In 1977 a graduate sociology student writing a thesis on the black consciousness movement was stopped at a police roadblock and, when it was discovered that he had research notes on this movement, was detained for questioning at the local police station. After some hours he was released but the police held his notes for several weeks, returning them to him a few days before his thesis was due to be submitted. Visiting social research workers also have had their material fall into police hands. Professor Gwendolen Carter and her associates experienced the mysterious disappearance of a brief case from their locked hotel rooms and its reappearance in a police station, and some of her

assistants were searched by the security police on leaving the country (Carter et al, 1967). Although unable to verify the accuracy of this, it was reported to me that a visiting researcher managed to obtain, on loan, a copy of the Hoek Report, a secret document prepared for the ultra-conservative Afrikaner Orde examining the power and workings of the giant Anglo-American Corporation. Within hours the researcher was visited by security police, the document taken and the person requested to leave the country immediately.⁴

These selected practical illustrations of interference by the state and its officials are given to provide a backdrop against which to briefly examine the web of legislation and Government policy circumscribing the research process. The impact of such legislation and policy on research cannot usually be so directly observed, particularly as it often prevents actual research being carried out in the first place.

The network of legislation and policy that denies researchers access to people, places, publications, documents and information on public affairs is vast. Matthews (1976) in an important recent book The Darker Reaches of Government states

"Denial of access to information is carried to its logical extreme by the relevant laws in South Africa. These laws are so negative in terms of both number and impact that it is impossible to conceive of anything on the positive side. This is true even at the level of local government where provisions requiring council meetings to be open are subject to the uncontrolled discretion of councils to resolve themselves

⁴ The origins of the Hoek Report are described in Hocking (1973). The report was also the subject of an urgent application by Professor P. Hoek to the Supreme Court, when he asked for an order restraining a white mine workers' leader from publishing any part of it and for all copies of the report in his possession to be surrendered.

into closed committee sessions. Local government documents other than council minutes may not be inspected unless permission is given..."

(p. 138)

At the national level, four aspects of Government restraint on access to information particularly affect sociological research: censorship, restrictions governing access to places, bannings of individuals and a variety of legislation regulating the gathering and reporting of specific information.

Turning first to censorship an estimated minimum of some 18 thousand published works are banned, including many sociological classics, most writings on Marxism, on African nationalism, a large range of works on South African society, political movements and all writings of South Africans who are banned or listed under the Internal Security Act. Among banned books are such as: J. Dollard Caste and Class in a Southern Town, Andre Beteille Social Inequality, C Wright Mills The Marxists, L M Zeitlin Marxism Re-examined, H J and R E Simons Class and Colour in South Africa, Leo Kuper Passive Resistance in South Africa, A Sachs Justice in South Africa together with most analyses of Southern African black writers such as G Mbeki The Peasants Revolt and E Mondlane The Struggle for Mozambique.

The complex thicket of censorship legislation has been ably commented upon by a limited number of South African writers to indicate the near impossibility of serious South African scholars keeping abreast of social science - and other - scholarly writing (Barry, 1976; du Toit; Welsh, 1976). Monica Wilson (1975) has commented that "a scholar must holiday abroad if he is to keep up to date with history, literature or even

theology written by black South Africans."

The scale of censorship has been stepped up with the Publications Act of 1974 which has encouraged the Publications Control Board to focus its attention on "political" material and enabled it to prohibit the possession of banned works (a "right" that formerly rested with the Government). During the first year of its operations, 191 publications were banned on political grounds and of these 20 were prohibited from possession. In 1977, however, 317 works of a total 1160 were banned on political grounds and 282 of these were prohibited to possess; in 1978 some 1178 works were banned and 437 prohibited from possession (Silver, 1979). This trend is reflected in increasing actions against the press. Since 1976 the important black newspaper serving Soweto, The World, has been banned as have issues of other black newspapers, The Voice and The Nation, and an escalating number of issues of student newspapers. A clear trend of increasing political censorship is occurring and to a growing extent "political and artistic expression alike are at the mercy of an Afrikaner elite which controls both the legislative and executive branches of government." (Dugard, 1978, p. 201).⁵

To a limited extent libraries are able to hold banned material of a "non-communistic" nature, but

"Hardly a library in South Africa has ever held it a duty to preserve the ephemeral pamphlets, leaflets and unpublished documents which an author needs in order to reconstruct the course

⁵ A new twist has been added as Afrikaans publications have come to be banned. In August 1978, Justice Snyman, Chairman of the Publications Control Board, said that some Afrikaans writers were dehumanising mankind and that the non-reading Afrikaners had a right to control what was being done to their language. (S.A. Institute for Race Relations, 1978, p. 132).

taken from time to time by the ANC ... Since 1960 to harbour records and publications of an unlawful organisation has been virtually a criminal enterprise. To walk into even a university library and ask for such things is to see the librarian shudder - and in some centres you would be fortunate if he did not telephone the police before you left the library."

(Times Literary Supplement, 24/9/71)⁶

Accompanying overt censorship are two equally important other forms of censorship: conscious self-censorship and unconscious self-censorship. Overt censorship has created a climate promoting these latter forms of censorship, which have come to assume increasing importance. Conscious self-censorship led the publishers of the Oxford History of South Africa to excise Leo Kuper's chapter on African Nationalism, which quoted many banned people and publications, from the South African edition of the book. In its place 53 pages were left blank. The publishers feared that if they included the chapter, the whole book would be banned and that Oxford University Press may be prosecuted. Kuper accused the publishers of acting in the "self-appointed role of surrogate censor" and of committing "an act of political repression" (Kuper, 1974). After some years the publishers were informed that the book would be banned in its uncensored version and the full version of it became available (despite the then Head of the Bureau of State Security launching an attack on the "communistic nature" of the book) (Welsh, 1976). This episode

⁶ Switzer and Switzer (1979) have also commented "The copyright libraries only began collecting South African serial publications on a irregular basis from the 1950s and some librarians apparently were so timid about holding 'objectionable' matter that they would not keep copies or would not classify those that were held. Indeed, most public libraries and museums, and even some provincial archives, have never kept black serial publications. In our survey, one university library and one municipal library actually admitted that black serial publications in this category had been thrown away 'in the past'..." (p. 24)

starkly brings out the existence of self-censorship and several social scientists I have spoken to admit having engaged in this practice. Most recently, the editors of a book of sociological readings said that they had omitted selected readings by authors who were banned, for fear of having their book proscribed. The testimony to the power of ideological control ultimately lies in the field of unconscious self-censorship: much of what could be termed the sociological imagination originates from the subconscious and ideas formulated there may be unconsciously suppressed by self-protective mechanisms. One writer commented in an interview that his

"... imagination is interfered with because one is continually aware of what society expects and approves ... When I was writing in the United States for an overseas market I could feel my process of imagination was incredibly freer. I find this kind of suppression of thought very frightening."

(Evening Post - Port Elizabeth, 19/6/79)

Another major area of legislation restraining sociological research is that governing access to places. Whisson, in J Rex (1980), sets out the limitations placed on anthropological research workers wishing to enter "black" areas and such limitations equally affect sociological and psychological research. One illustration of these restrictions occurred recently when a sociologist was given permission to interview in a black urban area but had to first submit for approval his questionnaire to officials at a Bantu Affairs Administration Board. They returned his form, having deleted some important questions. The general effect of having to obtain permission to enter "black" areas, as Hammond-Tooke (1970) points out, has been

"... to force the research worker to 'play it safe' either by selecting as politically neutral a topic as possible or by failing to push his interaction with the people or questioning as far as he should (lest his permit be withdrawn). This uncertainty also affects publication of results, there is a danger that if a report is published which criticises government policy, either implicitly or explicitly, further fieldwork facilities will be withheld."

(pp. 78-81).

Because of the permit system there are also limitations placed on methods of enquiry, as, for instance, it is generally not possible for white researchers to live in the houses of Africans or to enter African townships at night. Blacking (1970) has remarked that

"One result of this situation is the growth of a division of labour in South African anthropology: the blacks collect the data and the whites write it up. In this way white anthropologists continue to be the only experts on the blacks."

(pp. 77-78)

As significant are the restrictions governing access to South Africa itself. Cotter and Karis (1977) have documented the large range of noted Africanist scholars who have been refused visas to enter South Africa and suggest that, in particular, visas are refused to scholars who the Government considers might take a hostile stance to apartheid or probe too deeply into contentious or sensitive areas in the society.

Legislation banning individuals also affects free enquiry. Since the introduction of bannings in 1950 some 1358 banning orders have been issued and some 367 people who have been banned have left the country (Moroney & Ensor, 1979). As of October 1978, 146 people in South Africa were living under 3 or 5 year bans, amongst these are several staff and students of universities,

together with many black unionists, black political leaders and community workers. Although relatively few of those banned have been involved in social research, these have tended to be people concerned with research into such sensitive topics as wages and working conditions, and political organisations. Not only has their silencing affected important research work but the system of bannings has restricted access to key informants and their writings, and there can be little doubt that the system has discouraged others from entering into research into contentious fields.

A vast range of other legislation either directly or tangentially shapes the research process in South Africa, which cannot be fully commented upon here (see Dugard, 1978). Indications of the far reaching nature of this legislation are found in legislative measures prohibiting any person from furnishing information about any business enterprise in response to "any order, direction or letter of request issues or emanating from outside of the Republic". Similar prohibitions about obtaining information on the affairs of businessmen and companies are contained in the Wage Act, the Shops and Offices Act and the Industrial Conciliation Act, and these prohibitions have been used to deny trade unions the official adjudications of complaints they have made on behalf of their members (see Matthews, 1978). Inquiry into police behaviour is also limited by the 1979 Police Act Amendment which makes it an offence to publish "any untrue matter" about the police "without having reasonable grounds ... for believing that the statement is true." The penalty for such an offence is a fine up to R10 000 and/or imprisonment for five years. A simple denial by

the police of the accuracy of any report would probably succeed in preventing publication of such things as alleged malpractices or discrimination by the police. Similar legislative measures essentially ensure that sociologists and psychologists face a significant danger of prosecution if they publish hard hitting analyses of the military or state security forces and their behaviour.

Such legislation reaches down to the level of publication of opinion polls. In 1978 legislation was passed which prohibits the publication of these polls during election periods. During the Parliamentary debate on this measure it was claimed that opinion polls have "a preconceived malicious intention of influencing voters" and were conducted by "so-called learned professors" who were "agents" of the opposition. No evidence was presented of polls influencing any electoral outcomes and, outside of Parliament, it was suspected that this prohibition was not unrelated to a growing attraction to the habit of executing messengers bearing unwelcome news.

The growing power of the state to control access to information and the publication of it has led to many of the basic and important aspects of South African society being shrouded in secrecy and not being able to be exposed to public scrutiny. Where social scientists do attempt to probe into areas which are considered sensitive, often they have to face attacks for doing so.

In 1975 a political scientist at a well known university embarked upon a study of public policy making. He interviewed the then Prime Minister, several members of the Cabinet and

senior public servants. His research was aimed at understanding policy making by studying the process of how decisions were reached in such areas as the compilation of the budget, the control of the then Department of Information and the decision to invade Angola. Having completed the interviews for his study, the political scientist himself was interviewed by a journalist on his preliminary findings and a report of this interview appeared in the local press. It is then believed that the head of the political scientist's university department heard that the Prime Minister was annoyed at the appearance of this report. As the Prime Minister could decree any description of the workings of the Cabinet to fall under the Official Secrets Act, it is thought that the Head of Department wrote apologetic for the appearance of the article on behalf of the department and the university, and, in return, received letters from both the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet thanking him.

The political scientist then wrote the following letter to the Prime Minister:

"Dear Mr Prime Minister

The Head of my Department has informed me that he has received a letter from you in which you expressed annoyance at my use of information obtained during an interview I had with you.

In my original letter to you requesting an interview I stated that I was writing a chapter on public policy and desired to have an interview from the top. At no stage was confidentiality discussed and I assumed that the interview would be on the record.

If it was your intention that the discussion be off the record, I would appreciate it if you would communicate this directly to me."

In reply he received a letter from the Prime Minister's Private Secretary

"Dear,

I have been instructed by the Honourable, the Prime Minister to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated

It is clear from your letter under reply that you do not appreciate or pretend to appreciate the gravity of what you have done and under such circumstances correspondence with you will serve no purpose whatsoever."

The political scientist then wrote up his research which was published as a chapter in a book but all quotes and all case studies were deleted by the publisher who considered that their publication may be thought to be a violation of the Official Secrets Act. Even a footnote thanking Cabinet members for their help was replaced with a note of thanks to senior people active in public life.

A similar episode occurred when the Director of a university research institute of criminology wrote a biting analysis of the security laws. His article was given wide publicity and he informally heard that the then Minister of Justice was no longer willing to give him assistance on any matter. The institute at which he worked helped edit an academic journal and after this incident it appeared that some members of the editorial board who were state officials were distancing themselves from the journal. Other public pressures have been more overtly expressed. In 1978 the social scientists published a report of a survey on employment of black workers at the Crossroads squatter camp. The report was immediately attacked in a press statement by the chairman of the local administration board, who called it "irresponsible and provocative" adding that it

was "entirely unreliable" as "would be the case with every survey on Crossroads carried out by any private organisation" (Cape Times, 23/9/78). A similar attack was launched in Parliament on another sociologist who had written to the local press a series of letters regarding this squatter camp. He was accused in the House "of encouraging the people of Crossroads to break the law and defy authority. The result is inspired defiance of national policy." It was also suggested that his influence and meddling may have stirred up hate for whites, which is an actionable offence.

Another instance of unpalatable arguments leading to a Government attack on their author occurred when a prominent Afrikaans businessman, Dr A D Wassenaar, published his book Assault on Private Enterprise (1977). In it he proposed the novel argument that "Government intervention in the economy had grown to a point when one must ask whether South Africa could not be considered a communist state with an Afrikaans economic dictatorship." In an unprecedented move, a Government MP introduced a Parliamentary motion that "this House is of the opinion that the Republic's present economic system ... is based on the principles of free enterprise." The purpose of the motion appeared to be to enable the Prime Minister to launch a bitter attack on Dr Wassenaar and later to question his Party credentials and his loyalty to South Africa. This attack was widely reported in the press and it would be surprising if Afrikaans academics failed to understand the lesson behind it: criticism of Government policy could lead to public denunciation by their tribal elders and potential exclusion from the centres of power. It is not only from state and Government officials that attacks

and restrictions on sociological research and academic argument take place. There are community pressures also resisting free enquiry and research. Some of these pressures emanate from a black community resistant to "white research" upon them and adopting strategies to short-circuit it (Mayer, 1978), but at present most of the pressures derive from within the white community. This is scarcely surprising for, as has been pointed out by several authors, typically efforts to constrain free enquiry come from those who have a vested interest in the status quo and who fear that free enquiry may stimulate dissension and unrest.

Several episodes of white community antipathy to research have been reported. Van der Merwe, who directed a nation wide study of white elites, reports on a senior civil servant who withdrew his questionnaire, having completed it, and then launched an active campaign against the study:

"One of his major objections was that, even though we promise individual anonymity we might reveal group characteristics. When asked to explain he said it would be highly undesirable and embarrassing to the government if our findings would report liberal and anti-government attitudes among senior civil servants. We were unable to give the assurance that such findings would be concealed."

(van der Merwe et al, 1972, pp. 21-22)

Religious groups in the white community appear to be particularly prone to exerting influence on free research. Welsh, in J Rex (1980), reports on two episodes where religious groups have hampered open enquiry and several reports have reached me of university theological faculties exerting pressure on more forthright teachers and departments in Afrikaans universities and of hindering free-ranging sociological research

into groups on campus.

Community pressure has also been exerted from, or on, financial supporters of academic work in the social sciences. In 1978 a National Party MP, Mr Kent Durr, publicly argues that "businessmen should prevent their grants to universities being used by socialist thinkers" (Argus, 20/11/78). Another instance involved the planned use of an historic photograph on the cover of an annual report of a research institute at the University of Cape Town. The photograph was of three important student leaders - the President of the Afrikaanse Studentebond (Mr Johann Fick), the President of the National Union of South African Students (Mr Neville Curtis) and the President of the South African Students' Organisation (Mr Steve Biko). These leaders had been brought together for the first time to attend a conference some years back on the role of students in society. Staff of the institute had placed the photograph of this historic meeting on the cover of the report and some issues of the report had been printed before the chairman of the institute's major donor agency objected on the grounds that such a prominent display would upset some Afrikaans speaking people and would provoke the Afrikaans press into attacking the institute. The Director of the Institute then telephoned leading Afrikaans journalists who assured him that they would not take offence if this photograph was reproduced on the cover. Thereupon the grounds of the objection shifted and it was claimed that the Government would be offended by the photograph. Under pressure, and not wanting to offend his major donor agency, the Director of the Institute ordered the report to be printed with the offending photograph placed inside the report in a less prominent position.

The legislation outlined here restricting access to publications, places, people and information, together with the attacks and constraints on free enquiry, mirror directly the tensions and cleavages of a deeply divided society. In such a society it is scarcely surprising that the guardians of group and ideological purity have become highly suspicious of the social scientist and have acted to constrain his/her probings into its operations and behind its ideologies.

CONCLUSION

Constraints on sociological and psychological research and on the total social research process in South Africa emanate from a large number of varied sources: from the timidities of social scientists, from their trained incapacities and from direct pressures exerted on free enquiry by the state, Government and local communities.

In most societies a "relevant" social science has an uneasy relationship with the wider society whose operations it is probing. Many of the critical issues that such a social science deals with are controversial, and are ones upon which there is little agreement, academically or politically, although there is usually a "dominant" view on them. The social science that probes into and behind these controversial issues and questions the dominant view on them almost inevitably attracts hostility from the groups whose viewpoints and organisation are being examined and called into question by such probing.

For these reasons it is unsurprising that social research in South Africa has been subjected to attacks and that major restraints have been placed on free enquiry. The society is deeply divided and a growing polarisation between its two main

groups has produced fears that any clinical examination of social issues could weaken the strength of the dominant viewpoint and expose the dominating group to attack. Power and secrecy thus have become fused together.

Sociology and psychology fit uneasily into this society. Much of their teaching and research is welcomed and needed. But where the sociologist or psychologist probes too deeply into social arrangements, his trade becomes a dangerous one, but then it is he who should know this for, as the first professor of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand pointed out in his inaugural lecture in 1937,

"In every authoritarian country it is the worker in the social sciences who is the first to be tamed."

(Grey, 1937, p. 283)

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2

Answering the question: what is psychology ?



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"Psychology became a subject of special study about a century ago, when scientists began to work full-time on psychological problems and tried to apply scientific methods to these problems. Although it is not always easy to study psychological problems scientifically, psychologists try to do so as far as possible."

(Wits CCU, 1980)

In February 1976, as a first-year student of the social sciences, I attended my first lecture on psychology. It was a lecture which wanted to say something about the "discipline of psychology as a whole", and in so doing to draw newcomers like myself into the discourse of mainstream psychological practice. In this paper I want to take up one thing that was said at that lecture (and it is a claim which I think most South African psychology students hear fairly early on in their careers) - I was told that "psychology is the science of behaviour".

I was provided, in other words, with a particular kind of answer to the question "what is psychology?". It seems to me that this kind of answer is very much part of mainstream psychology in South Africa, and it amounts to what might be termed the received view in the teaching of psychology in this country. My intention here is to focus on the notion of "science" taken for granted in the lecture, although I shall have something to say about the concept of behaviour contained in the definition. I want to argue that there is a better and more fruitful approach to answering the

question "what is psychology?" than the one offered to me in my first first-year lecture.

The paper proceeds as follows: firstly, I try to invoke the context in which beginners are initiated in South African psychology departments. Secondly, I argue that although there is a dominant research tradition within which this initiation takes place (positivism), it should not be taken for granted. The third section comments on the historical emergence of psychology, particularly in America, and seeks to show that the mainstream idea of a scientific method is extremely problematic. Finally, I say something about the way we might move out of the crisis which this examination throws up.

I. PSYCHOLOGY AS A SCIENCE OF A SORT

To learn or to be taught that psychology is the science of behaviour is to adopt a particular view about what science is. What I would like to do in this section is to examine the framework of thinking into which psychology students are drawn in their study of psychology, and which is faithfully reproduced by the practitioners of the "science of psychology" in this country. The way I propose to do this is to examine discussion and comments on "psychology as a science" in three introductory textbooks prescribed to Psychology I students at the University of the Witwatersrand in recent years, namely those known as Krech et al (1974), another Krech et al (1982) and Kendler (1974).¹

Let me start with the third edition of Elements of Psychology

¹ I realise that I am, by focussing on Wits' textbooks only, opening myself up to the criticism that I concentrate on an anomaly rather than the mainstream in South African psychology. My impression, however, is that this is not the case and I would be interested in evidence to the contrary.

(Krech et al, 1974). The introduction to this book is remarkable for the way in which it takes "science" for granted. The task of psychology, it argues, is to lay to rest and to replace the "array of opinion" in common-sense interpretations of psychological matters. And then it simply assumes that science provides the basis on which this replacement must take place. We are not told why, or even what this might mean: it is merely introduced by the phrase "psychology, more than the other sciences,..." (p.xv). Further on we are informed that science is to be distinguished by its method of analysis: "Taking a whole, breaking it down into parts, and studying each part intensively constitute a common method of science" (p. xvii). Although not much else is said about this thing called "science", two things become clear: Krech et al (1974) see a unity of method between all the sciences, and they believe the way this method breaks the world up into bits and pieces is the proper way to study the world. The fourth edition of the same book (Krech et al, 1982) echoes the third, although the authors are obviously beginning to feel a bit uneasy about failing to spell out the received view of science. We are still drawn uncritically into the notion that psychology is just like all the other sciences (and again on the criterion of method):

"You may be surprised that psychology groups itself among the sciences. However, it is undeniable that psychologists regularly apply the same methods employed by other scientists and are bound by the same rules of evidence."
(p. 3)²

To be fair, there is an acknowledgement that psychology doesn't

² It is, of course, eminently deniable, on the grounds that it might not be possible to apply the same research methods to inanimate objects and to conscious people.

quite meet these exacting scientific standards, but this is ascribed to the youth of a psychological science which one day (obviously) will get there! This assumption about science (and psychologists) is hammered home again:

"The claim by psychology to scientific status rests upon its use of basic methods of research characteristic of other sciences."

(pp. 5-6)

And again: "Psychologists agree that when experimentation is possible, it provides the surest method of ruling out improper interpretations." (p. 6).

But this time the authors do spell out more clearly the received notion of science. In a detailed section on experimental method (real science, in the authors' terms), they stress the importance of formulating hypotheses linking discrete dependent variables to discrete independent variables. Even when psychologists must unhappily do correlational studies rather than experiments, the important thing is still "to describe the degree and direction of relationship between any two such measures (variables)" (p. 9). So the fourth edition echoes very well, and more loudly, the third edition's concern with breaking things up into bits and pieces for proper explanation to occur. Finally, Krech et al (1982) add another crucial element to this mainstream idea about what a science should be:

"... a scientific explanation is a prediction that under certain conditions certain things will happen."

(p. 9)

"With the development of understanding and new knowledge may come increased power to control what happens."

(p. 10)

In other words, what counts as valid scientific explanation is seen to be linked with increased power and control.

Kendler (1974) goes for pretty much the same kind of initiation as do the other two: "Psychology is the science of behavior.

Science. Behavior. Each word is critical." (p. 3). The

following paragraph from his book raises a number of important issues, so I record it in full:

"It is the job of scientific inquiry to discover those conditions or factors that bring about, determine, or cause a particular event. Different scientists concern themselves with different kinds of events - for example: a physicist studies falling bodies; a chemist is concerned with explosions; an economist evaluates fluctuations in industrial productivity; a psychologist analyzes the development of fears. The events differ, but the basic task is the same: all scientists want to discover those factors or conditions - scientists usually call them variables - which are effective in bringing about the occurrence of an event. This task can be clearly and simply expressed by the following formula:

$$\underline{Y} = \underline{f} (\underline{X}_1, \underline{X}_2, \underline{X}_3, \dots, \underline{X}_n).$$

In this formula, Y represents an event or the conditions which the scientist wishes to discover; f represents the phrase "function of" in the sense of "is causally dependent upon"; while X's represent those factors or variables upon which the occurrence of the Y event depends.

Once the scientist has decided to investigate a particular phenomenon, his task is to fill in the above formula - to discover those variables which cause that phenomenon."

(p. 4)

Clearly, psychology is just like the "other sciences" for Kendler, and the reason that physics is similar is a point about its "basic task", or method. This scientific method breaks the world up into bits and pieces (a procedure I shall from now on call

atomism) in order to explain the world. Scientists seek out variables, that is, they (assume that they can) separate out those aspects of reality which they can force into their $Y = f(X)$ formula. Finally, prediction and control also feature strongly in Kendler's story: to say that "scientists ... discover those factors ... which are effective in bringing about the occurrence of an event" is to say that they discover the means to predict and, thus, to control the occurrence of a particular event.³

Kendler, remember, also says that the notion of behaviour is "critical" to the self-definition of psychology. This only goes to reinforce my argument that a particular notion about science is being developed. If psychology is to be one of the "real" sciences, then it cannot concern itself with unverifiable, unobservable "nonsense" like the human mind! Behaviour is "clean", it is amenable to scientific enquiry, and the fact that crisis-ridden psychologists often allow stuff like emotion and thought to creep into the category only when they can be measured "scientifically" goes to show how much they work within the received view of what science is.

And so, the idea that psychology is some sort of "science" is carefully maintained and reproduced without really being considered. Each succeeding generation of "scientists" are taught to believe that they are doing psychological science, and an orthodoxy develops which can rightly be called psychology's "dominant framework".

³ Kendler says earlier that "the aims of science are often romanticized as ... [inter alia] control of the forces of nature" (p.4). But clearly, on the rest of his argument, science does aim to make control of phenomena possible. I find myself unable to make sense of this notion of "romanticization", unless he is hinting that he is a (scientific) romantic.

2. POSITIVISM

There are many more claims about science in this framework. I have touched on only some of the more important, but by now the ethos in which psychology is called the "science of behaviour" should be clear. A particular idea about what it is we do when we do science emerges as the dominant research tradition in South African psychology, and includes the following notions:

- *that there is a unity of method between all sciences, so that psychology needs to be just like physics, chemistry and other natural sciences;
- *that the scientific method involves refining laws linking discrete variables to one another in the form $\underline{Y} = \underline{f}(\underline{X})$;
- *that this atomistic method produces an adequate explanation of the object of study of psychology;
- *that science should make possible the prediction and control of the phenomena it studies.

Now it is important to keep in mind that these notions are all entailed within each other. The requirement that a valid scientific law take the form $\underline{Y} = \underline{f}(\underline{X})$ has its origins in 19th century physics, and it presupposes an atomistic world view. In addition, the $\underline{Y} = \underline{f}(\underline{X})$ formula makes prediction and control a real conceptual possibility, because it specifies exactly what needs to be done (\underline{X}) to bring about a required end (\underline{Y}). This homogeneity of concepts is what I mean by a "framework of thinking".

The framework in question is that of positivism. It is not the intention of this paper to go into an exhaustive examination and critique of the epistemological foundations of positivism, but simply to make the point that positivist science is not common

cause amongst scientists, whether they be of the "natural" or the "social" variety.

The central idea in the positivist programme is that facts exist in the world "entirely independently of human understanding, and provide the only reliable check on human thought" (Morrow, 1983, p. 35). The idea is that scientific theory reports neutrally, or "objectively", on the world "out there", and this leads directly to an atomistic method. Facts must be observed and measured, and therefore come to be seen as independent entities which can legitimately be "parcelled out" as variables for "scientific study". Once this assumption is made, general laws which predict and make possible the control of phenomena come easily. And so, we might come to believe, psychology is just like all the other sciences!

Yet there are numerous (and, incidentally, eminently respectable) frameworks which fundamentally challenge positivism, and make it clear that the nature of science is not simply given. Each would contribute a particular idea about what psychological research is, both on the ground and with regard to what we should be striving for. I mention a few such frameworks below:

*R.S. Peters: Peters' (1958) argument is that positivism is, in most cases, unable to provide adequate explanations in the realm of psychology. Psychology, he shows, must necessarily be concerned with explaining human action in terms of its purpose:

"... a proper understanding of what is meant by human action shows ... that human actions cannot be sufficiently explained in terms of causal concepts. ... Indeed, to claim that we are confronted with an action is ipso facto to rule out such mechanical [i.e., positivist - IM] explanations."

(Ibid, p. 7)

So Peters' challenge to positivism is that it cannot explain what is crucial to psychology, the actions of human beings.

*Kuhn's notion of paradigm: Kuhn (1970) has argued that "facts" are produced within particular theoretical systems, and do not exist in the world independently of theory. Different paradigms (sets of theoretical notions and practices) create their own frameworks of fact, so that positivism is just one paradigm alongside many others. Science, for Kuhn, is not given; rather paradigms give rise to "normal science":

"... research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundations for its further practice."

(Ibid, p. 10; my emphasis)

Kuhn's challenge to positivism, then, is that it cannot prescribe itself as the correct view of science, because legitimate competing paradigms all produce different notions of science.

*Phenomenology: Starting with the work of Husserl, phenomenology identifies a particular "krisis" in positivist thought. Husserl recognises that positivism represents an important commitment in the natural sciences to the "ideas, ideals, and norms of autonomous reason" (Gurwitsch, 1966, p. 339). But ironically, he says, it negates precisely that which reason shows to be crucial in the social sciences, namely, the structures in which human beings gain meaning and relevance (the lebenswelt, in Husserl's terms):

"A universe of ideal mathematical entities related to one another by exact laws is substituted for the Lebenswelt, which is relegated with all its features to the status of a mere subjective phenomenon."

(Ibid, p. 411)

So for phenomenology, the social sciences are of a different order to the natural sciences, and the notion of a positivist science of psychology misses completely what the central concerns of psychology should be, that is, the lebenswelt.

*Marxism: It seems to me that "the Marxists" (if such an homogeneous grouping exists) would all share a criticism of the atomistic, mechanical nature of positivism. For example, Politzer (1976) regards it as unscientific "because it considered the universe to be a complex of fixed and mechanical things" (p. 90). Marxists argue that positivism is not scientific precisely because it rests on the idea that the world can be isolated into bits and pieces (or "variables") in a manner sufficient to explain the world. Science, on the contrary, consists in the dialectical method, in which the world is viewed as a constantly changing totality of relations. For Marxism, science is characterised by its ability to explain "the concentration of many determinations" (Marx, 1973, p. 101), which make up the extremely complex whole of human society. For psychology, this means that we cannot explain by means of positivist "general laws" linking isolated variables to one another; a scientific psychology will explain the structures of human consciousness by locating them within social structures as a whole.

*Realism: Bhaskar (1979) and others like him have developed a realist critique of positivist philosophy of science. They reconsider naturalism (the idea that there is a unity of method between the natural and social sciences), and argue for an anti-positivist naturalism. The idea is that the natural sciences have changed so radically since the 19th century that their methods can no longer be termed "positivist"; likewise, the

social sciences have no basis in positivism. Thus, says Bhaskar, it is possible to talk about an essential unity of method between contemporary sciences which is fundamentally anti-positivist. Ironically, mainstream psychologists, in clinging to positivist notions of science, avoid the very debates that might lend some substance to their fervent desire to be scientists! Bhaskar's challenge to positivism is that it has outlived its usefulness in clarifying the nature of scientific activity.

It is clear, then, that there are a number of different lines of opposition to the mainstream notion of "science". The above mentioned frameworks each offer a particular, sustained critique of positivist psychological science, although they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.⁴ It is quite absurd to think that all scientists take the positivist ideal for granted; clearly, they often engage in a great deal of debate about what it is they do.

Yet, as we have seen, there is a real tendency for mainstream psychology to cling, dogmatically and uncritically, to positivism. In the absence of a widespread defence of positivist theory and methodology amongst psychologists, we need to seek the determinants of mainstream practice elsewhere.

3. THE HISTORY OF A SYSTEM OF PSYCHOLOGY

In this section, I suggest a reason for the positivist hegemony in psychology. I will argue that the history of mainstream psychology shows that this reason has to do with the social role

⁴ Indeed, my position is that a careful synthesis of the main epistemological tenets of the latter two "frameworks" provides a basis for a rigorous psychological science which would incorporate, and reread, the major insights of the other anti-positivist positions.

of positivist psychology.

Foucault (1970) offers an important insight into the nature of the search for the determinants of positivist psychology:

"There can be no doubt ... that the historical emergence of each one of the human sciences was occasioned by a problem, a requirement, an obstacle of a theoretical or practical order: the new norms imposed by industrial society upon individuals were certainly necessary before psychology, slowly, in the course of the nineteenth century, could constitute itself as a science."

(p. 345)

The suggestion here is that social forces gave rise to the mainstream idea of "the science of psychology" at a particular point in history. Foucault in fact argues that psychology has more to do with the maintenance of dominant interests in industrial society than it has to do with rational academic debate. He is, I think, correct about the emergence of positivist psychology.

An examination of the emergence of positivism in American psychology will make this point clear. Danziger (1979) points out that the development of psychology in the USA was a direct outcome of the social role of the discipline:

"[psychology] depended on legitimization in terms of the norms and interests of established power groups controlling the distribution of those material resources on which the production of knowledge depends ... their norms and interests reflect the basic political and economic realities of the society in which they flourish."

(p. 34)

In the United States at the turn of the century, control of research and the new universities was in the hands of businessmen and politicians whose interest was in tangible performance and

social control. Danziger shows clearly that there was an immense pressure on psychology to produce a technology of behaviour control which could serve the interests of a rapidly emerging capitalist economy. "A huge system of secondary and professional education had to be built practically from scratch; the human fallout from widescale migration and urbanization had to be dealt with; man had to be made to adapt to a rapidly rationalized industrial system; products had to be sold." (Danziger, 1979, p. 35).

In the face of these problems, positivism quickly became dominant in American psychology. Its concern with the prediction and control of human behaviour made it the ideal means for achieving the aims of American businessmen, and the $\underline{Y} = \underline{f}(X)$ form of explanation specified exactly those factors which had to be manipulated in order to control peoples' lives. The dominance of positivism in psychology was founded on its ability to provide the competent behavioural technology demanded of those early American psychologists:

"American psychologists responded to this opportunity with a promise that was totally innovative. This promise involved nothing less than the claim that experimental psychology would supply the fundamental laws governing all human activity. ... It must therefore be considered the 'master science' of human affairs, guiding all efforts to control people."

(Ibid, p. 36)⁵

Various aspects of the history of American psychology support this thesis: the incredibly rapid development and influence of

⁵ Consider for example the views of Thorndike, writing in 1907: "Psychology supplies or should supply the fundamental principles upon which sociology, history, anthropology, linguistics and the other sciences dealing with human thought and action should be based." (Danziger, 1979, p. 35).

Skinnerian behaviourism on the basis of its ability to produce specified behavioural objectives;⁶ the emergence of the vast technology of industrial psychology on the basis of its ability to combat the threat posed to management by organised labour from the 1940s on; and, more recently, the influence of humanistic psychology on the basis of its ability to locate the sources of social control within people themselves.

So it is clear that a positivist mode of thought established dominance in mainstream American psychology because of the social role it fulfilled, rather than because psychologists seriously understood the philosophy of science they were embracing. But what of European psychology?

Wilhelm Wundt's "first psychology laboratory" in 1879 is usually cited as evidence that it was European psychology which broke with the "horrors" of speculation in philosophy. We are led to believe that Wundt was the brilliant 19th century philosopher who, in his brilliance, established psychology as a science for once and for all. But Wundt has been seriously misrepresented in this way. He was in fact a strong opponent of the separation of psychology from philosophy, and there is no reason to believe that he argued for a distinct science of psychology. He held that "the most important problems in psychology were so closely connected with philosophical problems that a separation of the two would reduce the psychologist to the level of an artisan imprisoned by a covert and naive metaphysics." (Danziger, 1979, p. 31; quoting Wundt) (my emphasis). In fact, it was only the generation succeeding Wundt, and particularly the Americans, who

⁶ This despite the fact that Skinner's system has been shown to make no logical sense whatsoever. See Chomsky (1959).

first conceived a distinct scientific and professional identity for psychology. For example, Wundt in 1913 attacked a group of emerging German "scientific" psychologists for wanting to follow a distorted "American model not appropriate in Germany" (Ibid, p. 32). German psychology tended to be opposed to positivism, despite the fact that experimentation formed part of its philosophical endeavours.

In fact, the extreme positivist stance has not been as dominant in continental European psychology. This is not to say that French or German psychology is not determined by its social role, but rather that it is much more conscious of its philosophical origins, much less inclined to fall into the traps of positivism, and therefore much more likely to understand which interests in society it serves. All of this stems from the fact that psychology in Europe had to answer much more to a philosophical establishment than to rampant big business at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the more sophisticated European traditions in psychology inevitably do not have a social control function. Obviously a great deal of knowledge produced in any society will serve the interests that control the resources in that society.

For the purposes of my argument, however, the American "model" is crucial, not least because the South African psychological establishment has modelled itself on that of the USA. I have pointed out elsewhere that this is no historical accident (Moll, 1982): the political and social conflict that marks 20th century South African history provides the backdrop for the development of a psychology that had to legitimate itself in much the same way as it did in the America of the early part of

the century. Trends in psychological research in this country show positivism dominating more and more in response to the demands of particular social interests (see Andor, 1966):

*The social background of the 1920s and 1930s was characterised by developing institutionalised segregation. Significantly, social psychological research at the time was dominated by attempts to establish laws showing the nature of differences between blacks and whites.

*The 1940s saw the emergence of apartheid, with its crucial emphasis on separate education. Positivist psychological research received a boost from an increasing concern to correlate the educational aptitudes and abilities of blacks with their position in society.

*In the 1950s, South African capitalists were faced with increasing productivity constraints, and increasingly militant trade union activity. Biesheuvel, probably the most prolific industrial psychologist in South African history, makes it clear that the development of psychology was determined by these dominant capitalist interests:

"For short term educational and occupational purposes we are not concerned with what could have been made of a man ... the teacher and the employer merely want to know how he can best be trained and utilised within the limits set by his cultural antecedents."

(Ibid, p. 27)

The positivist language is clear, and the social interests which determine it, and which it serves, are equally clear.

Although this sketch of the history of psychology in this country has been brief, there is no reason to think that Danziger's (1979) analysis of the emergence of positivist psychology in America

cannot be applied usefully to the South African case.

The mainstream idea of what constitutes psychological research, then, is extremely problematic. Positivism holds sway not because it has been demonstrated to be a sound basis for psychological knowledge, but because it serves particular social interests in helping to prop up a social status quo.

4. SHADES OF A CRISIS

Let me now once again bring into focus the question "what is psychology?".

It should be clear by now that this question throws up an enormously complex set of issues, ranging from the epistemological grounds on which we might develop knowledge of matters psychological to the problem of exactly how it is that this knowledge relates to social structures as a whole. It points too, to the thorny question of the role that psychologists have played in the maintenance of an apartheid capitalist society, and on the other hand, to the possibility of developing an emancipatory psychological practice in this country.

Yet mainstream psychology seems to want to avoid answering the question. To be told that psychology is "the science of behaviour" simply closes down the possibilities for meaningful debate, and ignores the complexity of the question. One might be forgiven for gaining the impression that psychology is more concerned with mutual back-slapping self-preservation than with seriously addressing the real problems of the psychological domain. I think that an awareness of this has meant a real crisis in the lives of many psychology students.

The way out of this crisis is not to capitulate to the psychological establishment, nor to get out of psychology forever. It is in fact to work to establish psychology as a serious contribution, both theoretically and practically, to South African life, and to refuse to allow it to be dismissed as "the science of behaviour".

Part of the process is to take seriously the question "what is psychology?". The answer required is not an easy one to arrive at: it would be very difficult simply to define psychology on a piece of paper and believe that that was the end of the story. To break out of mainstream psychology, both theoretically and politically, is to engage in a struggle for an emancipatory psychology in South Africa. The answer to the question "what is psychology?" lies in this activity.

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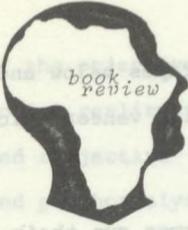


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Russell Jacoby's Social Amnesia.

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Jacoby's Social Amnesia is to date one of the very few attempts in the English language to investigate psychology from within a historical materialist framework. That it is an attempt made by an historian rather than a psychologist, and further, by an author writing within the European tradition of the Frankfurt School,¹ bears sad testimony not only to psychology's poor record as far as historical materialism is concerned, but more particularly to the poverty of Anglo-American Marxist and neo-Marxist psychological writing.

The underlying influence of the Frankfurt School is crucial to Social Amnesia. Against a background of the failure of post-first world war European Marxism, the rise of fascism and the complex and changing nature of contemporary capitalism, Critical Theory has realised the limitations of a purely objective Marxism, and recognised the need for inclusion of subjective factors in the understanding of contemporary social formations and revolutionary conditions. The need to retain this dialectic may be seen to constitute the theoretical backbone of (as well as an important motivation for) the book. Psychology, particularly psychoanalysis, has much to offer

¹ The Frankfurt School "is an informal term for the collective thought of a group of Marxist thinkers who, in Frankfurt, Germany, prior to the rise of Hitler, and later in exile, formulated a theory known as critical theory." (Jacoby, 1975, p. xix). Other prominent members of this school include Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Jürgen Habermas, and to some extent, Walter Benjamin.

Marxism in this regard - if one digs and scrapes below and before the a-theoretical, a-historical apologist veneer which has become its face.

Explicating this central project, numerous themes run their interwoven course throughout the work. A major theme explores the "revolutionary potential" of Freud and then traces its subsequent and systematic "perversion" in the work of the neo-Freudians (Adler, Horney, Thompson, Sullivan), the post-Freudians (humanistic-existential psychologists such as Rogers, Maslow, Allport), and the radical psychology of Laing and Cooper. These schools essentially fall foul of a psychologism whereby both the causes and cures of contemporary misery are reduced to the realm of the private individual. This both reflects and perpetuates not only a reactionary psychology, but the oppressive and repressive order from which these schools and the discipline itself arise. Jacoby frequently returns to the thesis that the emergence and popularity of psychology is no accident; "In boldest terms the individual psyche commands attention exactly because it is undergoing fragmentation and petrification ..." (Jacoby, 1975, p. xvii) under the total onslaught (sic) of contemporary capitalism. The subjective reductionism of psychology is not exceptional. The non-Marxist political or radical left (the hippie movement, student politics, bourgeois feminism, and the like) has, in its mindless affirmation - if not pursuit - of the lost subject (feelings, autonomy, private rights) ended up in either a "rampant narcissism" or an individualism where everyone is entitled equally to alienation, and the choosing of it. On the other hand, Marxism can be accused of a more or less exclusive pursuit

of the objective (i.e., the individual as agent and creator of social reality is ignored). And attempts to combine objective and subjective - the relationship for example between Marxism and psychoanalysis - have generally taken the form of sectarian attacks and counter-attacks, and usually succumbed to reductionistic distortions of both poles of the dialectic.

The failure of psychology, Marxism and the political left to hold simultaneously the subjective and objective moments, derives from a more general failure on the part of each to retain the tension between theory and practice. The consequences of a loss of theory in particular, weaves its way through Jacoby's arguments. At the heart of it all lies the notion of social amnesia. Social amnesia is the tendency, derived from loss of theory, to replace past (and present) thought which is critical with "apologetic half-truths under the sway of fashion". It is the phenomenon whereby the new, no matter how vacuous, under the banner of progress, not only displaces and distorts what is worth remembering, but atrophies even the desire to remember. The concept underlies every theme of the book. Critical Freudian insights give way to a new and sparkling conformist psychology of liberation; the political left, from its "liberated" backyard, enjoys a rapid turnover of slogans, and departments of sociology, politics and economics frequently even manage to leave Marx out of their syllabuses.

Social Amnesia, then, in the words of its author himself, is "an effort to remember what is perpetually lost under the pressure of society; it bucks at the planned obsolescence of thought. (At the same time) it does not ... intend to be an archeology, the mere uncovering of what is lost." (Ibid, p.xviii).

Not only does Jacoby offer a critique of both past and present thought, but he shuns what he calls the "collecting of antiques" - that is, the blind repetition of the old and past without its continual reworking so as to remain adequate to historical reality. Within this context, Jacoby describes the more progressive line of thought traced from within the Freudian ranks (Freud, Federn, Reich, Fenichel) to the Critical Theory of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and others. He dwells particularly on the latter school. Critical theory retains both subject and object by pursuing subjectivity until it devolves into objectivity (i.e., until it issues into the social and historical events that determine the subject). More particularly, while in contemporary bourgeois society it is capital rather than the living person that has individuality, critical theory pursues subjectivity "till, so to speak, it disappears" (*Ibid.*, p. 80). This is negative psychoanalysis, a study of subjectivity that does not exist. If this contributes to an explanation of the failure of revolutionary consciousness, it also gives the struggle for liberation direction.

"The overpowering of the subject by the object, which hinders it from becoming a subject hinders it just so from knowledge of the object."

(Adorno, 1970, p. 171)

"Before the individual can exist, before it can become an individual, it must recognize to what extent it does not yet exist. It must shed the illusion of the individual before becoming one. Subjectivity must be brought to objectivity so it can be realized. This is the nub of the matter."

(Jacoby, 1975, p. 81)

My summary thus far does little justice to the immense richness

of Social Amnesia. Within and between the major themes are many less developed ideas; ideology and false consciousness, the relationship between appearance and reality, a critique of positivism, the reformist nature of many struggles for equality, these and more are invoked. But it is not merely the wealth of ideas nor even their explicit and implicit cross-referencing which gives the work its richness. It is also the continual movement back and forth across the conventional boundaries between academic disciplines, an inseparability of ideas and values - thought and feeling - a vivid, dense and finely hewn writing style, and not least Jacoby's awareness, continually manifest, of the overdeterminations and detailed mediations of a reality in which things are no longer called by name. These characteristics, of course, make Social Amnesia a complex and difficult work. While some might consider this a failing, Jacoby's intention is not to be abstruse or to confuse, merely that he, like Freud, has "a strong dislike of simplifying things at the expense of truthfulness" (Freud, 1974, p. 332). Moreover, his work, like that of other critical theorists, informs by demanding active participation of the reader.

This is not to say that Social Amnesia is without problems. As careful and complex as he can be, as remarkable as his capacity is to pierce appearances and reveal the essence of things, there are areas in which Jacoby is guilty of sweeping generalisations and surface analysis. Humanistic-Existential Psychology, for example, is thrust aside with global rancour; no heed is paid to its historical context and progressive elements. Similarly, his discussion of the political left and of Critical Theory is suggestive and patchy, and, in the latter case, uncritical. And

Freud is heralded, somewhat too optimistically and unreservedly, as (in the wry words of a colleague of mine) "more of a Marxist than Marx himself".

To be overcritical in these ways would, however, be to expect too much. Jacoby explicitly states that his work is polemical, and he does not pretend, or aim, to give an exhaustive account. All in all, I would say that the book is exciting, stimulating, provocative, and intellectually and emotionally demanding. It is without doubt an immensely important work for any serious student of psychology and for any progressive thinker. In the words of Jacoby himself:

"It would be brash to claim that there is nothing more urgent than to work out a relationship between psychology and social theory; similarly it would be exaggerated but not false to state that without a psychological component Marxism degenerates into abstractions and irrelevant dogma; or that without a theoretical and social content psychology erodes into a technique. There are many urgent things to do, and many more urgent than this. Yet the pursuit of these issues is an integral part of the theory and praxis of liberation; social and human transformation."

(Jacoby, 1975, p. xxiii)

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