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

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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 telegraming 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

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[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 Rhoodie, 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."
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> (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 under-lined 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 irreplacable 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 esculating 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

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[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 sub-conscious 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 tangentally 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 Ammendment 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 appologising 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 and 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 occured 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 embarassing 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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