INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY
AND THE STUDY OF BLACK
WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA :
A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

Bonginkosi Nzimande

"The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew :

that is the simple truth from which we must start

... It is the anti-semite who makes the Jew.

(Sartre)

1   INTRODUCTION

A number of reasons have prompted the writing of this
article.   Firstly, I have been watching painfully how
industrial psychology in South Africa has over the years,
avoided or deliberately ignored some of the critical areas
relating to the study and understanding of black workers.
Apart from glossing over the issues, the framework within
which black workers have been studied is too narrowly defined
and in almost all instances it is biased in favour of
management.

Secondly, the development of industrial psychological theory
has been characterized by a lack of critical analysis,
particularly in relation to (black) labour.   This has
resulted in very simplistic and highly questionable
conclusions and statements being made about the position and
experiences of workers.

Thirdly, there is a significant lack of intervention in these studies and theoretical debates by both black workers and black scholars. This has evolved into a situation whereby debates about blacks in industry have been taking place without black participation which has helped reproduce the racialistic fallacy that whites are "experts" on blacks.

However, it must be emphasized that this intervention is not made for the sake of a black person's intervention, but it is an intervention by a concerned South African psychologist. This point must be emphasized as to dispel yet another myth that just because a person is black, all that he/she says is true and correct, as proponents of black consciousness would like us to believe.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to critically evaluate current methods and theoretical paradigms used by mainstream industrial psychology in the study of black labour. An attempt is made to highlight the tension between industrial psychology as a science and its study of workers. Some tentative comments are also made on the teaching of industrial psychology in South African universities, to throw further light on the subject under discussion. Lastly a very broad basis for an alternative industrial psychology framework within which to articulate the position of black workers is outlined.

However, it must be mentioned that this article is only a critique of the direction mainstream industrial psychology

has taken in South Africa. Therefore, because of its nature, its shortfalls may be that:

1. Its thrust is on critical evaluation and it is not a positive and substantive analysis of the issues raised, within an alternative framework.

2. It is also aimed at a broader audience than normally would be the case. There is therefore a possibility of people, particularly those within a critical social science, to find some of the arguments too simplistic and common knowledge to them.

Nevertheless, these disadvantages are perhaps offset by the fact that there is no critical evaluation of these psychological studies on black workers (except perhaps Fullagar (1983) in relation to labour relations). Secondly, before any positive critical analysis of the issues can be done, within an alternative psychological paradigm, a critique of the current state of affairs is the logical starting point. Although the danger of being critical and never offering any alternatives is realized, this article is regarded as offering something more than that.

2   METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

For the purposes of a clearer discussion this subject is discussed under two headings:

i) methodology and (ii) findings.

One important feature about these studies on black labour is that they have been carried out largely with the view to answering the question: "What motivates the black workers so as to improve productivity?"   The bulk of them have been carried out under the auspices of the National Institute of Personnel Research (NIPR).   Others have been carried out by independent researchers who are mainly psychologists, and by private organisations or companies.   The limitation of reviewing only published studies is acknowledged.   It is assumed, however, that the unpublished and usually confidential studies have mainly taken the form of the published ones, because bodies such as the NIPR and the HSRC have dominated and led the field of research in this area. The NIPR has also been contracted by various companies to carry out research on their behalf.

It must be pointed out, however, that this review concentrates on the general features of these studies and uses single studies as examples only where they are appropriate.

2.1 Methodology used in such studies

The one major characteristic of the methods used in such studies is that they have avoided the use of more open-ended approaches that may yield undesirable or controversial information.   Such research techniques have been very popular in industrial psychology.   In fact, the massive body of literature on black workers have been accumulated using such methods which restrict and exclude sensitive information.

The first popular method which has been extensively used in studying black workers has been the critical incident technique. This technique has been most frequently used by Backer (e.g. Backer, 1973). In this method a "subject" is required to recall an incident or particular situations where he/she felt strongly motivated and enthusiastic about his/her job and another situation where the individual felt very unhappy and lacked enthusiasm. Backer (Ibid) goes on to explain that in cases where the "subject" has difficulty in formulating sequences of these events, the interviewer would "... discuss the subject's job with him in general ..." In this connection it is very important to lead the subject away from complaints of a general nature towards the identification of a specific incident by the subject" (my emphasis) (Ibid p. 60).

The second method which has also been used quite extensively is the laboratory experiment (e.g. Graen, 1962). In such studies the experimenter creates conditions that will simulate a work organization operating under different conditions. The experimenter then observes and records behaviours resulting from these different conditions. This method follows the "independent-dependent variable model" in the strictest sense, where the experimenter manipulates the independent variable and record the effects or changes in the

dependent variable.

A third technique also used extensively in psychological studies of black workers is the <u>response scale</u> and ranking techniques.   In such scales the individual is asked to react to certain statements and is given a continuum, for example, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Another approach, and perhaps the most popular approach, is statistical correlation techniques.   The basic aim of this technique is to get to what extent certain variables or factors correlate with other variables or factors (e.g. Barling, 1977, Coldwell, 1982).

A closer examination of these techniques reveal a number of shortcomings.   The critical incident technique for instance, has the danger of basing its analysis on two isolated events to the exclusion of other related factors in a person's work experiences.   The fact that the individual is even led away from issues and complaints of a <u>"general nature"</u>, as Backer says, can also lead to a biased and shallow understanding of a person's total work experience.   One may further ask the question "To what extent can the researcher be sure that those complaints of a general nature do not form an important part of workers' experiences in industrial organisations?"

The laboratory experiment is one of the most dangerous techniques ever to be used in studies of black workers by

industrial psychology. First of all why should the psychologist worry about setting up a simulated work organisation, when real organisations, where production takes place are there, and have been with us for so many years? Is it not a waste of time to try and do the impossible, "creating" a work organisation that can never reflect all the social processes of production inherent in real industrial organisations? The laboratory experiment is so artificial and useless that it is a positive sign to observe that this technique is on the decline in industrial psychological studies of black workers in this country. For instance, the way the experimenter structures the simulated factory has a definite influence on the type of results produced. Factors included, or rather excluded, in the simulated environment will also result in particular behaviours manifested. The result of the experiment will therefore be nothing more than a reflection of how far the experimenter's imagination could stretch.

The response scale and ranking techniques have also been used in a very problematic fashion in South Africa. Firstly, in such scales the subject's manner of response is prestructured and tied to the terminology used by the researcher. The subject is unable to use his/her own terminology in explaining a particular phenomenon, and immediately the results are likely to be biased towards what the researcher wants. Secondly, the subject is not

usually given an adequate opportunity to explain why
he/she agrees or disagrees.   In most instances, such
response scales do not give subjects the freedom to
express any feelings beyond what is required by the
researcher.

Ranking also has serious limitations which may have a
profound impact on the nature of results produced.   This
technique requires that the subject arrange or rank a
number of items in order of importance.   The major flaw
in this technique is that more often than not the subject
has to rank factors given by the researcher, thereby
eliminating other factors which maybe of importance to
the individual.   Besides this, ranking does not go
beyond listing items.   It does not take into account the
individual reasons for a particular ranking.   It remains
solely at the discretion of the researcher to deduce the
reasons why some factors are ranked lower or higher than
the others.

Correlation studies form just about the bulk of
psychological studies on black workers.   It must first
of all be acknowledged that correlational or, broadly
speaking statistical methods, have yielded some fruitful
results in industrial psychology.   However this
"success" has resulted in a number of researchers
remaining fixed on these techniques.   Correlational
studies are now used indiscriminately, even where they

are inappropriate. This has prompted Strumpfer (1980)
to conclude that "... most psychologists and industrial
psychologists ... tend to be method-orientated rather
than the other way round," (p. 19).

The point which this article is trying to get to is that
although the methods as such may be useful scientific
tools, they have been used in a manner that excluded
contentious information, as it will become evident in the
discussion of results of such studies. There is also a
notable tendency in such studies in avoiding open-ended
approaches because of their potential to include
contentious issues, or aspects of worker behaviour which
industrial psychology is unable to deal with.

The point being made here is that as a starting point, a
thorough and critical review of these methods should be
undertaken as to identify their limitations or
potentialities to contribute to the development of
psychology as a relevant social science. The first
question to be asked is why is it that such methods have
yielded results that exclude social, economic, political
and ideological issues. Such issues do not only affect
the lives of black workers, they also affect the very
practice of research.

"Social research is never conducted in a political
vacuum, the structures, tensions and values of a
society condition are 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." (Savage, 1983, p. 21).

The problematic use of these research techniques have manifested themselves in a number of studies. In most instances industrial psychological definition of problems facing black workers has been wrongly formulated. Let us illustrate this point with an example. A number of industrial psychologists in this country have, for instance, attributed "low productivity" of black workers to their cultural backgrounds which emphasizes need for affiliation as opposed to "Western culture" which emphasizes need for achievement and individualism (e.g. Nasser, 1981; Coldwell and Moerdyk, 1981).

For instance Moerdyk and Coldwell (1982) argue that :

> While the white child is typically socialized into patterns of early independence, self-responsibility and competitive materialism, the black child in Africa is generally reared in patterns of group awareness, shared responsibility and the need to preserve and foster communal bonds - especially family and tribal bonds. (p.190).

This sweeping generalisation about blacks (including black workers) is boldly and courageously made without any reference to the possible influence of the current socio-political situation in South Africa. The problem, according to Reese (1981) and Moerdyk (1983), is the cultural background of the black worker, not the political and social formation in South Africa. According to these researchers, any research inquiry

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therefore will have to explain and solve this cultural
mismatch.

> This process of trying to "fit the job to the
> man" is where I believe South Africa should
> be looking to solve its productivity problems
> in the short and medium terms. (Moerdyk,
> 1983), p. 9).

This is a very erroneous formulation of the "problem" by
Reese (Ibid) and Moerdyk* (Ibid). In spite of Moerdyk
himself recognizing that "...South Africa's low
productivity is a multidimensional problem, reflecting a
complex interaction of historic, political, social,
cultural and economic factors", (p.1) he still goes on to
focus only on cultural factors to the complete exclusion
of the other factors. Therefore, in such instances,
these research techniques are used to investigate
problems whose very basis is either false or narrowly
defined. The problem in the above example is defined
such that use of these techniques will yield shallow and
biased results.

Hindess (1973) has made a similar observation about the
use of statistics in Sociology, that many sociologists
have been uncritical in their use of social statistics.
His conclusion on this may well be true of the way
Industrial Psychologist have used these on black workers'
studies. "Their use is uncritical and there is no
attempt to demonstrate that the criteria in question can
fulfil the function assigned to them" (Ibid p.44).

*"problem" is in quotes because the very issue of
productivity and black workers is a subject of
considerable controversy (see C. Meth, 1983).

Perhaps a second example would help to clarify this problem. The basic model of experimental research is the "independent-dependent variable model". McCormick and Tiffin (1977) explains this model thus:

> In research there are two primary types of variables, namely, independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variable is the factor that is varied, frequently being controlled in some way by the investigator, such as level of illumination on a work task, the method of training, or size of letters in a reading experiment. The dependent variable (or criterion) is the measure of the effects of the independent variable such as work production, learning time ... (pp.11-12).

The way problems relating to black workers have been posited using this model have also been problematic and have never really been examined critically. Using the same example of culture and productivity, culture in this instance is regarded as the independent variable with productivity as the dependent variable. The researcher manipulates "black culture" in order to effect change in productivity. This can be done by "civilizing" black workers into Western culture thereby improving productivity as Reese (op cit), again supported by Moerdyk (op cit), claims: "The message seems obvious: only after our black management candidates have been 'deculturized' can they benefit for present training." (Reese, p. 23). The question to be asked here is : Can culture, which is treated as an independent variable in this instance, not be construed of as a dependent

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variable in itself with the broader social formation or class position of the workers viewed as the independent variables? Can one not argue that cultural formations are a reflection of the basic economic relations and their contradictions? This, therefore, clearly shows how the very definition and counterposing of variables can be narrowly defined, with the likelihood that use of these research methods will only serve to justify the "scientificity" of the results.

One is at this stage tempted to ask why has Industrial Psychology continued to apply these methods without any full consideration of the above mentioned issues and problems. I would argue that industrial psychologists have successfully hidden behind "scientific practice" to justify their results. Since such methods and techniques have been categorized as scientific tools, they have therefore been liberally used in psychological studies of black workers, without any critical examination of the danger of being used in an ideologically biased fashion.

> 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" (Moll, 1983, p.64).

What has contributed to this successful hiding behind the

banner of science? The word "science" is surrounded by a mystique that makes it difficulty for most people, including scientists, to challenge these scientific procedures. The "scientific" tools used in so many studies have over a period of time been accepted in psychology as empirically valid and have yielded consistent, scientific results. This has further contributed to the mystification of these techniques. "We loyally believe in the myth of science as apolitical and objective, as sometimes pure and above humans" (Anderson, in Rose & Rose, 1976, p.130). Although it is not the aim of this article to debate whether industrial psychology is a science or not, it is worth pointing out some of the issues to be confronted in the use of science in our society. The fact that such tools have been used under the banner of science, further warrants these few comments on this subject.

First of all it must be pointed out that science can be subject to misuse. There is a very real danger, as it is already happening that science can be used quite successfully to serve particular interests. In their analysis of the social role of the natural sciences, Rose and Rose (1976) have convincingly argued that science in the developed countries has been successfully co-opted to serve the interests of the ruling elite. This then has an important message for the "scientific" study of black workers by industrial psychologists. We must as a

matter of urgency, just like Rose and Rose (Ibid) have done in relation to the natural sciences, start asking whose science is it that we claim to be practising? Who pays for it? Who decides what problems to study? Who benefits from it? The fact that most psychological studies on black workers in South Africa have been carried out to answer questions posed by management undermines the very scientific status which industrial psychology is so much concerned about. This gives rise to one very pertinent contradiction which Industrial Psychology has thus far failed, either deliberately or through ignorance, to locate and expose. Industrial psychology is undermining the very goal it is trying to achieve i.e. scientific practice. It is also contradictory for scientific practice in industrial psychology to be unable to articulate a contradiction, whilst the very aim of science would be to explain such contradictions. In short, if science means objectivity or neutrality, as we are made to believe, it therefore cannot afford to take a side and for its problems to be formulated by management.

Secondly, it needs to be mentioned that science is not immune to ideological infiltration. The social sciences in particular (including psychology) are the most vulnerable to such infiltration. In fact, ideology is even capable of posing as science. Industrial psychologists, particularly in South Africa, need to be

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very much aware of this reality. Our psychological
practice must also guard against such dangers. Anderson
(in Rose and Rose, 1976) has made an interesting
observation in this regard, which must be a warning to
all psychologists who believe in genuine and relevant
scientific practice.

> When we look at science and technology as
> they function within the Third World
> societies, we see two contradictory
> processes. The first is a liberation
> process. Science and technology have freed
> large sections of societies from the killing
> extremes of labour and diseases. The other
> is an oppressive and exploitative device.
> (p.123).

Anderson has located yet another contradiction inherent
in scientific relations between "developed" and
"underdeveloped" countries. This relation or rather
this contradiction is a pointer to another manifestation
of the ideological role science can play in contemporary
society. Science can be advanced as panacea to a number
of problems facing the "recipients" to cover up for its
basic aim, that of facilitating social domination and
control. Yet another contradiction to be brought into
the open by industrial psychology!

Thirdly, I feel obliged to explode the myth that science
can be practised without being influenced by the social,
political, economic and ideological factors in the
particular environment in which it is practised. In
order that scientific practice be scientific it has to

take into account these factors and be able to explain their influence on the "psychology" of those people under study. There is a very popular myth, which is particularly disturbing, that science is above these relations. This is to a large extent a manifestation of the negative effects of positivism in the social sciences. Science is part of this environment and no matter what can be said to the contrary, it is affected and infuenced by such issues.

> Inventions are not make in a vacuum or from the vacuum; "new" ideas do not fall from the sky; they are part of a world of attitudes, way of thinking and previous ideas about reality... (Anderson, ibid,p.125).

This myth has led to a very ahistorical practice of science, particularly in South African industrial psychology. Again, Anderson aptly summarizes this situation.

> According to the ideology of Western civilization, the way of presenting the current situation in the Third World ... begins by ignoring history. Thus the world appears as a God given set of nations with some that happen to be more developed than others. There are no causes for this situation. It is never presented as part of historical process, and therefore all solutions offered for development are based on mimickery of the "advanced" countries. "Western thought" takes for granted that ... Third World countries will always be behind although they can get a little closer through some fatherly development programme. (Ibid, p.127).

Industrial Psychology in South Africa, in its endeavour

to study black workers scientifically, has entered into
this relation with its "subjects". One does not have to
search too hard to find evidence of this (e.g. Coldwell &
Moerdyk, 1981, 1982). Another piece of evidence on this
approach to the study of Black workers, has been the
application of Maslow and Herzberg's theories.

Maslow and Herzberg have been applied in a very
ahistorical fashion, as if the United States and South
African social formations are the same, in line with a
psychology which takes the laws of human behaviour as
simple universals. Without repeating Wiendick's (in
Jubber, 1979) excellent work, it is worth giving some
examples to illustrate his. Herzberg, for instance,
studied American accountants to come up with his
motivator-hygiene theory. This theory has been applied
in South Africa without questioning the fact that
Herzberg based his theory on research done on a strata of
the American professional-managerial class. Maslow's
concepts have also not been critically examined in the
light of their meaning and application in the South
African contexts which may be different from the American
middle class definition and understanding of these. I
think that Wiendieck's argument in relation to Maslow's
concept of "self-actualization" clearly illustrates the
deficiency of such attempts.

> The terms "self-actualization" is an empty
> shell until it is filled with concerete
> meaning. This meaning is provided by the

dominant normative system and the powerful
social structure individuals have been
socialized in without their having been asked
for their consent and without being aware of
it.. Structural societal norms, firstly,
define different ways of self-actualization
for different groups and, secondly, make
these people believe that the way given to
this is really their own choice. A person's
conviction about self-actualization of his
self concept is the result of his
socialization process and must therefore be
evaluated against this background. It would
be extremely narrow-minded if the industrial
psychologist takes these individual beliefs
in isolation and regards them as guidelines
for his attempts to reconstruct the work-
world to fit the idea of human dignity (in
Jubber, 1979, pp.245-246).

The last comment I would like to make about science
emanates from the previous one. It should be understood
that science is a social practice - practised by human
beings living under concrete, material conditions.
Science does not emanate from "supra" human beings or
from the heavens in the sky. Such understanding will go
a long way towards the demystification of science. The
removal of this mystique is one of the most urgent tasks
facing not only industrial psychologists, but scientists
from all disciplines.

Industrial psychologists are therefore faced with two
major projects in this regard. The first immediate
project is the critical examination of the scientific
status of current industrial psychology. This would help
us define what a relevant and truly scientific industrial
psychology would be like. It is only after this task
has been undertaken can we then be in a position to

properly evaluate the relevance and usefulness of the scientific tools currently used by industrial psychology. This would facilitate the development and use of relevant scientific tools, which is the second major project for South African psychologists. It is also important to mention that the tools being discussed here may not be unscientific as such, but they need to be "liberated" from the context of the dominant psychological practice.

However, there is a very real danger that the way these have been used and modified in the past may have neutralized their scientific value, hence the writing of this article.

2.2 A Critical Overview of the Findings of these Studies

A review of the psychological studies on black workers reveal a number of dominant themes.

The first theme that is common across many studies is their apoliticism (apolitical explanation of findings) and a disturbing inability to situate such findings within the broader social context. Vorster (1970 in Backer, 1973*), for instance, in his reviews and discussions of studies carried out in the sixties, makes the following observations and conclusions.

*This critique of Vorster's arguments is a response within his own frame of reference. The critique would be more damning if we analysed the class origin and character of "career", "vocation", "profession", etc.

"He (the African worker) does not seem to be
at a stage yet where he thinks in terms of a
career."

"Most workers claim they have no occupational
preferences whatever when first starting
work."

"...workers want their children to enjoy
secondary education, there seems to be no
strong desire on their behalf for
occupational advancement." (pp.34-35).

Such conclusions avoid the very fundamental questions
that are closely related to such generalizations. The
first conclusion, for instance, implies that there is an
underlying cause for this situation, but Vorster never
took his analysis further to adequately explain the
possible causes. The underlying assumption here is that
black workers, by nature or through "traditional"
cultural conditioning and by their "backwardness", do not
think in terms of a career. Vorster never bothered to
discuss influx control as one major obstacle which may
have "caused" this condition. For instance, very few
black workers have control over their work lives as a
result of influx control measures, amongst other things.
The situation facing workers is such that they do not
have a choice of where to work, in which company and
types of work to do. All is dependent on how an
individual got the job through the labour bureau
procedures. The most important factor here is the fact
that legislative measures have effectively made it
impossible for any person who goes through this procedure
to choose a career or to have an occupational choice.

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This is one fundamental political issue which is
blissfully ignored by Vorster in his conclusions.
Therefore such conclusions are apologetic of the broader
social system which structures and controls the
allocation of black workers at work. This dominant
approach in South African psychology in general has been
aptly summarized by Holdstock (1981).

> Since we have been unable to escape the traps
> of our compartmentalized approach to science,
> we have deduced quite misguidedly that
> psychology and politics are mutually
> exclusive. In doing so we have effectively
> cut ourselves off from one of the burning
> issues of our time. (p.126).

The second theme dominant in the approach and findings of
industrial psychological studies of black workers is the
"black-white dichotomy". Whilst the fundamental project
and aim of positivist psychology has been to study
individual differences in human behaviour, South African
industrial psychology has expanded this project and taken
it a step further to include the study of racial
differences. For instance, the primary emphasis in the
study of black workers has been on their "blackness" as
opposed to "whiteness". Herzberg (in Backer, 1974), in
response to the inapplicability of his theory to the
South African black workers, argues that:

> The blacks are different to whites - at the
> moment they are interested in different
> factors to motivate them than is the case
> with most Whites - the motivators are totally
> absent - they don't even expect anything in
> the line of motivators. (p.2)

This statement has been endorsed by, amongst others, Backer (Ibid) as a basis for explaining problems related to the application of the M-H theory to black workers in South Africa. The findings of many other studies have taken this line of racial categorization. The underlying assumption is that the different racial groups need to be motivated and treated differently. Barling (1981) in his summary of a cross-cultural study of Maslow's theory in industry also categorized his findings in terms of the same notion of racial differences.

> The physiological, safety and security, and love and belongingness needs predicted promotional aspirations for the Black group, while only physiological needs predicted promotional aspirations for the Indian subjects. On the other hand promotional aspirations were not predicted significantly by any of the needs for the White group. (p.1 - Abstract, emphasis added).

Backer (1973) thinks that such approaches are consistent with a scientific method.

> For such studies a sound theoretical framework and a systematic scientific approach... is essential. The emphasis should be on differences between groups centralized/decentralized areas, rural/urban, ethnic differences...in so far as motivation is concerned. (p.62, emphasis added).

This approach raises a number of issues that should not be glossed over unchallenged. First of all these findings fit "hand in glove" with the ruling ideas in this country. Wiendieck (in Jubber, 1978) has a valid

point in this regard:

> Given the fact that South Africa is an
> apartheid society, the South African
> industrial psychologist is solicited into
> producing motivation theories for racial
> groupings because the society dictates that
> the various race groups may not be motivated
> in terms of the same opportunities for
> development, promotion, self-expression,
> remuneration, security, achievement, self
> determination, and so forth. (p.232,
> emphasis added).

This therefore confirms the arguments above about the

fact that science is not "immune" to ideological

"contamination". The importance and urgency of

relooking at the scientific status of psychology as a

whole in South Africa is further reaffirmed. Without

any understanding of the social structures within which

psychology operates,it remains incapable of separating

the wood from the trees (science from ideology). As

industrial psychologists, we must be wary of any

explanation or theory which, as its starting point,

assumes that because of "racial differences", various

race groups have to be motivated, trained or understood

differently.

We need to be very critical and examine closely all those

theories or packages especially designed for different

race groups. This would help us to determine whether we

have fallen into an ideological trap or not. Lastly but

perhaps the most important thing that needs to be

investigated and clarified about black workers is the

source of their current conditions of work. The
following questions need to be answered by industrial
psychology in particular : should black workers in the
first instance be understood as blacks or as workers?
Are they workers before they are black or is it the other
way round? If in the final analysis they are primarily
workers, as the present author would argue, and
secondarily black what implications does this have for
scientific analysis in psychology? These questions need
to be explored and answered and not coercively repressed
by the ruling ideas and the dominant political practices
of this country. Without exploring the above questions
the scientific status of industrial psychology is at
stake.

The third theme evident in the findings of psychological
studies on black workers is an extension of the second
one. Although this may be a diversion of some kind, it
nevertheless arises out of the general "findings" of the
bulk of such studies. The emphasis on the racial
differences in South African industrial psychological
studies has led to attempts to research and explain what
is called "Black Personality". This attempt to
"discover" a black personality initiated in South Africa
by de Ridder (1961) has culminated in a creation of a
Division for Research concerned with Black Personality by
the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) institute for
Psychometric Research founded in 1974. This development

has led to the adaptation of the Thematic Apperception
Test (TAT) exclusively for blacks, called the TAT-Z (see
Minnaar, 1979). The development of such a test implies
that there is a white or non-black personalty and
secondly, that blacks cannot be assessed in terms of the
same TAT that is used for whites because blacks have a
different personality structure. This test has further
adopted the model of the urban/rural split i.e. urban
blacks are different for rural blacks.

This of course, is the cornerstone of the apartheid
politics practised by the ruling group in South Africa.
All that the theory of black personality is doing is
reproducing, under the banner of science, the dominant
ideological reasoning in South Africa.

The late seventies have witnessed the emergence of very
"sophisticated" psychological theories on the South
African black workers. These theories are now based on
the concept of traditional African culture or values as
the determining variable in black worker behaviour. For
instance, Moerdyk and Coldwell (1981) argue that the main
"problem" facing black employees is their African world
view which is fundamentally different from the Western
world of view. This postulation does not even touch on
the other aspects of the everyday relationship between
worker and manager. Their analysis completely ignores
the social, political, economic and ideological relations
in the broader South African political context. The

assumption is that there is a common underlying African world-view found in all Africans irrespective of their economic and political location in the broader society. An interesting feature of these culturally based studies is the fact that psychology has played a more prominent role in developing such arguments e.g. Nasser's adaptation of McClelland's need for achievement theory. According to Nasser (1981) blacks have a low need for achievement because black culture displays a high need for affiliation.

There are a number of grave errors in this cultural approach to the understanding of black workers. First of all this approach assumes that all blacks have the same culturally patterned behaviours and beliefs. This completely ignores the fact that blacks are not a homogeneous group. (I wish to emphasize here that this does not by any means refer to the different ethnic groupings as "created" by the state machinery.) There is now a clear dividing line between working class and middle class blacks across the so-called ethnic groups. Their life-styles and conditions of living are fast becoming radically different. Therefore to assume a common culture across class lies is a grave error and a very myopic understanding of the social structures in South Africa.

Secondly, because such analyses fail to understand the points just made they become an apology for the system.

Thirdly, traditional African culture does not exist in the manner we are made to believe. Instead there are different cultures that are emerging which almost oppose one another i.e. working class culture and black petty bourgeoisie culture. It is absurd that in present day South African we can talk of a traditional African world view in the face of such glaring structural changes, brought about by industrialization and gradual destruction of black peasant life. Does this mean that blacks exist outside of the South African social structures? This obviously cannot be true. The other problem with the cultural approach is that it has a static view of black workers. It fails dismally to understand a very simple fact : the situation of black workers is continually changing and therefore their behaviour pattern is always changing. The failure to take this into account has resulted in the very major failure of industrial psychological studies of black workers, that of developing tools of analysis which are sensitive to these structural changes. In view of the above problems this approach therefore remains unacceptable. Instead it has only been used in creating a monster in South African industrial psychology, some form of "Ethnopsychology", and this includes everything which goes with ethnic analysis of

human behaviour. In summary, it is appropriate to quote
what Cesaire said of these attempts to create an African
philosophy and world view in Africa thirty-three years
ago!

> Bantu philosophy is an attempt to create a
> diversion. It diverts attention from the
> political problems of the Bantu peoples by
> fixing it on the level of fantasy, remote
> from the burning reality of colonial
> exploitation (in Hountondji, 1983, p.37).

Hountondji* (Ibid) himself concludes that

> ... every such theoretical project, every
> attempt at systematizing the world-view of a
> dominated people is necessarily destined.
> and intended to fuel an ideological debate
> which is centred elsewhere - in the ruling
> classes of the dominant society (p.49).

The above exposé only leaves one with an uncomfortable
conclusion: that thus far the psychological picture of
the black worker is nothing more than an imaginary
creation of the dominant framework in South African
industrial psychology. There still exists the real,
concrete black worker who exists somewhat outside this
conceptualization.

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* The reader is referred to this man's works
for a rigorous critique of writings on
African philosophy.

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3. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEACHING OF INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The current research framework and findings on black workers can perhaps be linked back to the teaching of industrial psychology in South African universities. The present author has made a number of personal observations on the teaching of industrial psychology in our universities which are to a large extent responsible for the reproduction of this dominant framework. These are worth mentioning to place the whole subject in perspective.

A cursory examination of university syllabi of industrial psychology clearly shows that more emphasis is placed on teaching personnel techniques rather than analytic skills to enable students to have a deeper insight into the psychological problems and issues facing South African industry. The difference between a personnel management course an an industrial psychology course today is often only in name. As a result of this, students with very poor analytical skills are produced thereby blunting their ability to analyze and reflect on the range and meaning of social, economic, political and ideological factors in industrial behaviour. That is why so many studies in industrial psychology are geared towards solving practical problems facing industry in relation to black workers. As a result industrial psychology has adopted a pro-management approach in its study of black workers, to say the least is non-academic!

The second problem in the teaching of not only industrial psychology, but psychology as a whole, is the compartmentalization of the social sciences. This artificial division of the social sciences has served to justify the exclusion of other factors considered to be outside the field of psychology. This has led to the emergence of what I would call "abstract psychologism" (a tendency to over-psychologize using abstract concepts, in spite of other evidence to the contrary, which traditionally lie outside the subject matter of psychology, e.g. need for achievement, self-actualization, etc.). This has also encouraged the analysis and explanation of black workers using these vulgar concepts.

The division of psychology into various sub-fields has also exacerbated the problem. For industrial psychology this has made emphasis being put more on "industrial techniques" rather than on psychology in industry. The "technique-oriented" teaching of the subject has made a lot of industrial psychologists "forget" that industrial psychology is nothing more but the application of general psychological principles in the analysis of industrial behaviour. A true psychological "diagnosis" of industrial behaviour is therefore lost. However, the worst thing is that this divorce of industrial from mainstream psychology is now being imposed on all universities training industrial psychologists. Another disturbing feature of the breakaway is the requirement that industrial psychology be taught as a commerce subject. Whilst theoretically this cannot affect the content of what is

taught, it has however thrown the subject deeper into bondage, of being a "management science" rather than an independent social science. The "utilization orientation" of the subject has thus become firmly entrenched, as is evident in the study of black workers.

Lastly, but not the least, there is an almost obsessive preoccupation with professionalization and specialization in industrial psychology. Progress in the subject has been most of the time judged in terms of how many professionals are produced each year. Less emphasis has been placed on evaluating the type of professionals produced and their understanding of the broader parameters within which they function.

All the above points need to be debated and clarified, in the true spirit of academic and intellectual debates characterized by freedom of expression and exchange of ideas. There is a very high probability that the inadequate study of black workers is related to the teaching of the subject and the lack of debate, or rather lack of a suitable climate for such exchange of ideas.

4. CONCLUSION

Perhaps the best way to conclude this papers is by posing the question : what is to be done?

In the light of these inadequacies in current industrial psychology, a completely new framework needs to be developed

within which to carry out authentically scientific psychological studies of black workers. The criteria for a truly scientific psychology would include the development of new units of analysis and concepts which are sensitive enough to identify and articulate contradictions inherent in the dominant relations of production. Such tools and units of analysis must also be able to detect any ideological influences in studies of black workers.

A critical evaluation of the current research strategies and framework is also urgent. Industrial psychology must ditch once and for all the current management framework within which black workers are studied. The abandoning of this approach can only help the discipline to erase its present stigma of being a particular brand of a managerial ideology. The research techniques themselves will have to be expanded as to include relevant, but previously ignored, variables.

Industrial psychological studies will also have to include the concept of <u>history</u> as the most important foundation upon which to build a more relevant psychological understanding of black workers. Thus far, these psychological studies have been ahistorical. For instance, the cultural models of understanding black workers have operated as if worker behaviour exists outside of history. History has taught us that not all blacks are workers and it is not only blacks who are workers. It is also history which will judge this very vulgar approach to understanding black workers, to prove that the repository of objectivity and truth is history itself.

It is only after the above groundwork has been done that we can hope to see the emergence of a materialist industrial psychology. This means, as Strumpfer (1980) puts it, "... getting out of our laboratories into the real world, out of an environment controlled and manipulated into experimental sterility, into the places where people live and work in dread, dearth and desperation". (p.18).

Lastly, but not the least, it needs to be pointed out that up to this point in time, industrial psychology has been using workers as "guinea-pigs". As Fullagar (1983) points out that, "research has tended to have been done on workers rather than _for_ workers or with them, and as a consequence large areas of work remain ignored." (p.1). It is crucial to understand that industrial psychologists have been doing research on black workers, claiming that this is done in their name, although workers never asked them to do so and the likelihood is that workers are not even aware that such statements and assumptions are made about them.

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