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SOCIAL ALIENATION, VALUES  
AND CONCEPTS AMONG  
BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS IN  
THE PROCESS OF URBANISATION:  
A BRIEF HYPOTHETICAL EXPLORATION

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Centre for Applied Social Sciences  
University of Natal  
Durban

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The brief preliminary review which follows is part of a broader research project in the general field of human adaptation to rapid social change. The project, which was launched in February of this year<sup>1)</sup> is concerned centrally with identifying and understanding some of the less well-recognised or less-obvious difficulties which urbanising blacks experience in their encounter with the industrial, administrative, social and civic milieu in the modern city.

The broader project is concerned not only with cultural and value dissonance which may arise in the urbanisation process, but also with cognitive or conceptual issues which arise when people encounter a social system in which the basic principles of social, administrative and economic organisation may be at variance with those applicable in the systems to which they have adapted previously. As such it is not solely concerned with the important issues of what is valued, admired or believed. It is also not necessarily limited to the attitudinal or motivational domains of existence. It is concerned with a less openly expressed or experienced level of encounter in the city, and also perhaps with a less patterned mode of response than the cultural and attitudinal. It is certainly a sub-dimension of culture contact but this sub-dimension, if it exists, is made up of the possibly very varied underlying misconceptions and inappropriate constructions to which people may be prone when adapting to a social world across a gulf of culture and language. Some of the difficulties, hypothetically, we predict may be culturally patterned. Others may arise because of social distance, unfamiliarity or even mistrust of social order which is so manifestly controlled by a separate social group, the whites. Whatever the nature of the constructs and concepts at issue, however, it is fully intended that the final analysis will be sensitive to the problems of more patterned cultural and attitudinal disjunction between urbanising blacks and the established expectations in the institutions in the city.

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1) Grateful acknowledgement is made of the funding assistance obtained in December of 1979 from Co-operative Scientific Programmes of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. The full title of the project of which this report is a preliminary part is "Cognitive Adaptation to forms of Modern 'Disequilibrium' among urbanising Blacks"

The very caution and hesitation with which this "conceptual" sub-dimension of inter-group contact has been introduced above is an indication of the circumspection with which it has been approached in our research design thus far. We are convinced that this area of investigation is important, yet it is elusive. At the same time it encroaches on fairly diverse social-psychological processes. Brief mention must be made here of these diverse possibilities for the theoretical location of this area of our interest.

1. It can impinge on the area of inter-group contact in situations of segregation in which unfamiliarity, mistrust or bad faith can augment difficulties in communication between groups set apart by their very different positions in the social, political and economic structure.
2. It can relate to a field of socio-linguistic interest. Here the question arises as to whether or not between African languages of origin as used publically and English or Afrikaans of the typical middle class variety there lie differences in "hidden grammar" which make agreement in effective meanings in communication problematic.
3. The problem we seek to identify could be systematically shaped by cultural values relating to domains of work, social interaction, power, status and possessions. Such values may be "traditional" in the sense of being survival elements of a pastoral subsistence culture with clan organisation and face to face political and administrative processes. More probably and more importantly, however, the values may be derived from a non-traditional sphere; the "interstitial" culture of the segregated townships on the social and geographic periphery of the "white" city.

In this sphere traditional values and established urban norms may co-exist in uneasy interaction with one another. It seems that many traditional values have persisted in varying degrees amongst the majority of urban Africans, not as prescriptions for behaviour, but as negative sanctions - this is particularly seen in the case of social and sexual

relationships. An example of this is clearly seen in young teenage girls' responses to the modern behaviour of white girls. They aspire to more "liberated" behaviour, but are not sure how this will be seen in the eyes of their parents and other blacks. They respond that a person is 'uncivilised if she still follows old customs', but are unsure of new modes of behaviour.

By virtue of the fact that role expectations of this emergent urban group are not yet institutionalised or accepted by all, there exist many contradictions within the behaviour and aspirations of these urban blacks. Many of these inherent contradictions are not necessarily conscious, but nonetheless serve to alleviate the stress that 'city life vs. traditional life' demands.

Contained within these two opposing processes (i.e. the discarding of many traditional values and behaviour patterns needed to meet the demands of living in western urban society) there exists an area in which blacks have developed a 'program of coping' which is expressed in various ways and which may yield a pattern of concepts which are neither consistently traditional nor consistently urban.

With increasing urbanisation the dimension of future time has been emphasised, hopes have been stirred up, progress is worked for, but within this lies an illusion - that these two opposing processes appear to work at the same rate. In fact, however, the casting off of traditional culture and values is far more rapid than the acquisition of the 'garments of the future'.

They are made to look identical, but it is suggested that there is a gap between them. Within this gap blacks have built up this 'program of coping' - on the one hand aspiring to the norm of 'white society' and on the other rejecting the whites that have created them; on the one hand casting off traditional values in order to be 'modern' in some areas and on the other hand needing the sanctions of tradition in order to have some identity within a known system.

4. The values could in some measure, of course, even be the outgrowth of extended poverty in urban areas and distortions in social priorities arising from a heritage of felt deprivation. The phenomenon of so-called 'culture of poverty' deserves cautious consideration in this regard.

All these possibilities have to be explored in this study and this is a daunting prospect in a programme which is intended to be fairly brief. For this reason it seemed appropriate that some extra time and effort be expended in conducting unstructured preliminary probes in order to narrow the field. The main results and impressions from this preliminary work are contained in this report. The exercise has indeed assisted us in making some choices between alternative lines of investigation. These choices are set out at the end of this report followed by our proposals for the systematic further investigation of this sub-field using more structured approaches in carefully chosen samples of people of varying degrees of exposure to the urban milieu.

We do not claim that our choices for further investigation are the only ones that could be made. There remains a rich field of research possibilities in areas we have chosen to exclude. Here we think particularly of aspects of socio-linguistic investigation, some of which we have set aside in large measure because of our own unfamiliarity in the field. Like all projects, this one will invite further research to complement or correct its selectivity.

Finally this report does not attempt to deal with two areas of interest which will be included in the systematic investigation now being planned; these being the cognitive models in areas encompassed specifically by the theory of modernisation<sup>2)</sup> and the other being the effects of concepts and social constructs resulting from specific socio-economic problems in black urban areas

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2) Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries*, Heinemann 1974.  
 Marion J. Levy, *Modernisation: Latecomers and Survivors*, New York, Basic Books 1972. Also *Modernisation and the Structure of Societies, a setting for International Affairs*, Princeton University Press 1969.

like crime, illegitimacy, housing tenure, township administration and the like. These areas of interest are no less an important part of the investigation than the issues discussed here, but as said initially, the objective of this report is simply to try to achieve greater clarity in one area before proceeding.

## 2.1. SOURCES OF PRELIMINARY DATA.

The information in this report is partly the result of preliminary fieldwork which has taken various forms described below, and partly hypothetical, based on the authors' informal and long-term observation of the inter-racial situation. The preliminary fieldwork took the following forms:

- 2.1.1. Individual Interviews. On an informal basis many unstructured individual interviews were conducted at two schools in the Durban area exploring a wide variety of topics in order to both build up a good relationship between the researcher and various students to allow for freer and more open discussion, and to acquaint the researcher with the variety of attitudes, perceptions and cognitive models of the students interviewed.
- 2.1.2. Formal Interviews. One hundred and seventeen students were formally interviewed at a Durban night school by volunteer interviewers mainly for reasons not connected with this project. In the formal interview situations, however, the researchers were able to include various questions of their own in order to ascertain the educational aspirations of the students, how they used their time after work and study hours, their general response to the need for education and certain other social attitudes. It was considered possible that educational attitudes could point to more basic concepts relevant to the study.

### 2.3. Teaching Interviews.

With the need for preliminary insights in mind, one researcher entered a teaching situation at a night school. She offered a written English course and devoted each lesson to a different question relevant to this research. The students were asked to write an essay on a given topic for the following lesson in which it would be discussed. This arrangement was used to avoid any influence in the essay coming from discussion in the group before writing the essay. The topics discussed and written about ranged from family and friendship relationships, perceptions of the city and the country, aspirations in the work situation to advertising and inflation.

In order to identify cognitive models, the researcher chose to direct questions within three broad areas:

- 2.3.1. To explore the perceptions of a selected number of issue areas - art, hobbies, education, work, status, family and friendship relationships, advertising, expenditure and leadership.
- 2.3.2. To investigate various linguistic propositions that might suggest the limitations or advantages of Zulu as a mother tongue for Blacks moving into the city and to what extent this particular linguistic background has limited communication or has been the deeper cause of problems of communication.
- 2.3.4. To explore the extent to which blacks in the city are actually acquainted with various key structures within the system, eg. inflation, the educational system, the governmental structure, their rights within a work situation etc., and to what extent non-acquaintance with the system has been a causal element in inhibiting involvement and development.



#### 2.4. Previous Research.

Work was done some years ago investigating the changing perceptions of groups of school girls particularly in terms of interpersonal and family relationships and the relationship of the individual to the wider community as a result of the changing demands of western urban lifestyles. These data were never published and are of particular interest to this study as a comparative exercise. Two particularly interesting areas considered in the present context were students' understanding of a 'civilised person' as opposed to an 'uncivilised person' and their perception of 'Europeans' - what they look like, how they live and how they behave.

All the information that has been gathered is specific to a particular group of students in each case. However, it is evident that all responses fall within a broad, but similar framework. In the case of the teaching interviews, for instance, the majority of students were protective about their school; the school itself was unaffected by the boycotts that were taking place in Kwa Mashu at the time of interviewing and many of the students saw this school as 'different' from other schools. Most of the students were working as well, so it can be assumed that in the majority of cases motivation to become educated was particularly strong, while politicisation was low. This would no doubt not be the case at a school in Kwa Mashu at the same time.

Nonetheless, despite the varying methods of interviewing and the selection of the respondents, the preliminary work has suggested many common 'perception models' and has thrown light on problem areas. By virtue of the looseness of the interview structure, many interesting and spontaneous remarks were recorded which offer clues for systematic follow up.

## 2.5 Propositions to be Explored.

Flowing from this preliminary and informal fieldwork, the researchers have chosen to present a selection of propositions which they hope to explore in a formal interviewing program. As already stated, even though an important theme in the investigation will be that of cognitive or conceptual adaptation, the aspects of value and attitudinal change cannot be ignored for reasons which are both substantive and because of the fact that attitudes and cognitions are so closely interwoven. In the analysis it will be inevitable that both levels of response will manifest in most topics considered. For purposes of presenting the research approach, however, broad distinctions have to be attempted between the cognitive and the attitudinal aspects, hence the subdivision of topic areas as it appears below. The cognitive aspect will again be subdivided into perceptual and linguistic areas.

The propositions given below relate to what will be the dependent variables in the analysis. These are the topics which align closely with the day-to-day problems and perceptions of black people in a South African city. Certain variables, although substantive in their own right, will be used for this analysis as independent variables along with other independent factors such as demographic characteristics, length of urbanisation and the like. One of these variables will be that of modernisation, broadly along the lines developed by Inkeles and Smith and Marion J. Levy.<sup>3)</sup>

### 3. VALUE CONFLICTS AND ATTITUDINAL ISSUES.

- 3.1 Proposition 1: That in many cases there lies within blacks' perception of the city a contradiction from the start. On the one hand they are in strong support of the modernness and technology available in the city; on the other hand reject the conditions of their lives in the city.<sup>4)</sup>

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3) Inkeles and Smith, *Ibid.*, Marion J. Levy, *Ibid.*

4) This has emerged strongly in other research: see J.J. Durand, *Swartman, Stad en Toekoms*, Tafelberg, 1970.

In a response from 51 students to a question about how they viewed the city it was found that only 6 of these students saw it negatively - 'dangerous', 'noisy', 'crowded', 'is the root cause of many social problems', 'dirty and unhealthy', 'many worries'. Forty of these students saw the city positively, alluding to its beauty (10), that so much was available (7). In most of these cases there was a suggestion of the civilised life one could lead in the city and in many cases respondents were actually supportive of the city - 'lovely', 'proud of it'.

When asked to compare town life and city life responses emphasised the technological improvements on country life that one found in the city - electricity, laid on water, transport and 'no grass houses'..

In a further discussion, it appeared that what 80 percent of the respondents disliked most about the city was the element of danger and fear; living in the townships was a life-threatening experience. In a study conducted in this Centre<sup>5)</sup> this was evident in the responses of 150 Kwa Mashu residents to community problems. Sixty-two percent saw crime and threats of physical safety as the worst problem of living in the townships — the highest single response.

The city represents civilisation and progress to blacks, yet they live daily with the threat of crime and danger. A further 20 percent recognised that 'in the city blacks are not wanted' because of 'those places which are written Non-white'. There are no doubt two cities!

The second highest response emphasised that in the city, one must have money to survive - "in the city everything is so damn high, the cost of living, transport, electricity", "you waste a lot of money". The cost of civilisation is high!

The relationship between parents and their children has been eroded by city life. "Our parents are so disgraceful about their youth", 'you must buy toys in order to be a good father or mother to the children'.

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5) L. Schlemmer, *Needs, Well-being and Morale in the City*, Subjective aspects of the quality of life among Blacks in Durban. Durban, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, Document and Memorandum series, 1978.

In general the response was strong that the city was breaking up families, eroding morale, and was too expensive to allow for a decent lifestyle, yet in earlier discussions the virtues of the city were expounded at length. This contradiction will be discussed further in the next section.

- 3.2 Proposition 2: That there exists a sharp contradiction between the perceptions blacks have of whites and of their contribution to black development.

Essays were written by Std. 8 and matriculation students (both male and female) on two subjects. The first was "What is a civilised person and what is an uncivilised person?" and then another entitled "How would you describe a white person (European) to someone who had never seen one before. Describe what he looks like, how he lives and how he behaves." Because these were essays and no closed questions were asked in order to get specific responses, it was expected that responses would be enormously varied. This was not, in fact, the case.

The main factors that would contribute to make up a civilised person according to these students were education, observable behaviour, the influence of Christianity, adherence to a western standard of dress, health etc., and finally a display of altruism.

- 3.2.1. Education and civilisation were not necessarily synonymous - many students maintained that one could be educated and still uncivilised or vice versa. Even white people! However it is still seen as the one single tool that will transform their lives.
- 3.2.2. An important factor in being a civilised person involved observing the rules of social etiquette and adhering to western behaviour patterns. This entailed 'no fighting', 'no shouting and cursing', 'no drunkenness', 'good table manners and carrying a lady's parcels'.
- 3.2.3. The moral implications of civilisation are rooted in Christianity and 'church'. About 28 percent of the respondents claimed that religion was an important part of being civilised. Within this was the ability to distinguish 'right and wrong', the rejection of traditional customs in order to take up the

tools of civilisation which would bring the nation of blacks from 'darkness to light'. 'Peace and progress' would result from civilisation.

3.2.4. Incorporation of western standards was another prevailing factor important to civilisation, i.e. in terms of dress - 'fashionable', 'neat', 'no rural dress' - the awareness of the importance of order and organisation in social settings and business, the emphasis of reason at the expense of non-reason. Adherence to western health and diet practices was yet another important factor in more than 50 percent of the cases.

3.2.5. Another of the respondents' observations suggest the changing orientation in the individual's relationship to the wider community; the individual must not be 'selfish', but 'care for others', work for and become involved with others.

This is an interesting response considering the close cohesive society that blacks have traditionally known. The emphasis on community concern is a traditional value that has become fragmented by the emphasis on the individual found in western society. That blacks now stress the importance of an altruistic quality in the civilising process can either be seen as a third stage, needed to re-establish communication and cohesion within a dismembered township existence (the notion, no doubt, initially derived from the "Christian ethic"), or a social wish fulfillment functioning as a stabilising factor to cope with the second stage in which they find themselves - that of a community in which identity is difficult to define and in which antagonism and competitiveness is rife among poor people struggling to subsist.

It was clear in these essays that civilisation is viewed as positive and valuable to blacks for various reasons, ranging from the predominantly high recognition of physical changes in health practices, cleanliness, manners, dress and behaviour as civilising, through to a deeper adherence to the value system of whites incorporating reason, a perception of the future, progress, confidence and morality.

Responses, however, were always stronger in the former case

suggesting that manifest appearances of 'civilisation' are most easily recognised; however the functions and processes that epitomise a western capitalist structure are not mentioned as often. It is these - a perception of the future, the recognition of progress, a changed morality and an adherence to reason and efficiency - that ultimately are recognised by whites as the tools for blacks to acquire in order to compete within white dominated business and industry.

Thus blacks aspire to 'civilisation' and easily conceptualise its outward manifestations, but are less frequently inclined to visualise the underlying demands of civilisation. These underlying features represent the operative expectations which whites have of blacks, since whites would take the outer manifestations for granted. It is clear now that whites, who represent civilisation, who mostly live in cities, the centre of progress and civilisation, have behaviour patterns and standards against which blacks measure their own lives. Yet there is also an intense sense of failure resulting from both their inability to cope with city life and the rejection they experience from whites in the city. There may also be a lack of sufficient awareness of the assumptions which whites have as regards appropriate modern urban behaviour. Not having what whites expect, the rejection which blacks experience may appear as cruel insensitivity to the merits of their outward achievements.

At whatever level it is valued, however, civilisation is the key image. Whites epitomise that civilisation. Yet here the sharpest contradiction emerges.

The general perception of whites was one of 'rich' and 'clever' people who live a life of 'luxury' and 'ease' in 'beautiful houses'. The one predominant negative quality of Europeans was their 'laziness'. Because whites were lazy (as well as weak) they employed servants to do their work for them.

Of all the respondents 34 percent maintained that whites behaviour towards blacks was based on unqualified malice; a further 23 percent pointed out that although whites might show

good manners, they were pretenders and chose to behave kindly only when it suited them. It is clear then that 57 percent of the group perceived whites as either dishonest or vindictive.

In an alternative analysis, 30 percent (the highest single response) revealed clearest evidence of the inherent contradiction within their thinking. On the one hand whites were perceived to be unfair, 'have superiority complexes' and were prejudiced in their relationship with blacks, but in the final analysis blacks were supportive of the presence of whites in South Africa because they had 'civilised' the black man, and brought technology and education. Within this analysis it is clear that when describing whites as civilised, respondents aspired to the behaviour and values of these whites, yet when asked to discuss whites' actual behaviour the predominant response was negative.

- 3.3. Proposition 3: Although black aspirations are both high, unrealistic in relation to their quantity and quality of education and described in terms of the "white ladder of success", ultimately many blacks seek independence from the system and would prefer recognition and respect within black terms.

In a study undertaken at the Durban night school it was evident that over 80 percent of the students hoped to become professionals of some kind - a percentage that is painfully unrealistic considering the high failure rates in schools, and the likelihood of admission to and success in university. Of this 80 percent, however, 62 percent were interested in the helping professions (social workers, nurses, teachers, etc.), the predominant reason being given as "to help my own people". This motivation must possibly be seen as superficial when considering the number of black teachers that move into industry for better salaries!

Nonetheless a high percentage have chosen to aspire to jobs in which they would be working with their own people, due, no doubt, also to the fact that these are the salaried professions open to them requiring only a limited amount of post matriculation study.

However, when students were asked whether ultimately they would

prefer to hold down managerial and executive positions (a well paid area of work open to them as trained and educated people) within the white structure or to be completely independent of the system as independent shop owners, the majority chose the latter. The reason for this could be one of two things: either that in fact blacks would prefer to measure their achievement against and be respected for achievement by blacks rather than by white employers or perhaps their need for respect from fellow blacks is no more than a euphemistic way of justifying their aspirations towards high profits. Black shopkeepers have a substantially higher income than that of the typical black executive in industry. There probably is some need, however, to derive status from the black sector due no doubt to the lack of a clear status definition of black roles in a white controlled urban setting.

A further intention in this study is to interview a number of white personnel officers in industry and business to establish if and how employers define the avenues of upward mobility for black employees in these situations. This definition may not itself be adequately communicated, resulting in feelings of helplessness and confusion on the part of black employees thereby leading to difficulties in improving their position within white industry.

- 3.4. Proposition 4. Ambivalence regarding the competitive ethic. The researchers have noted that black people in everyday communication pay considerable lip-service to a communal or cooperative ethic, with freely-stated notions of a brotherhood or sisterhood of black people. Yet previous research by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences has suggested a lack of expressed trust and neighbourliness in the black townships, no doubt generated by conditions disposing people towards normlessness and exploitative relationships with others.<sup>6)</sup> The roots of this conflict between expressed value and everyday perception may lie in the following background processes. The African traditional background is one of communalism or a form of community solidarity based on kinship and clan structures. These structures have dissipated as effective forms of social organisation in the city, yet

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6) See for example, Valerie Møller, Lawrence Schlemmer, Judson Kuzwayo, Beata Mbanda, *A Black Township in Durban: A Study of Needs and Problems*, Durban, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, 1978.



the spirit remains. The conditions in the city — crime, scarcity of rewards, crowding, etc., dispose towards mistrust and competitiveness. The spirit of the old communalism is invoked as a reaction against the interpersonal strain of city life. As with blacks in the United States ghettos, cries of brotherhood are in part a defense against mounting predation.

Whatever the origins of the contradiction, however, it has to be resolved in some way by the individual in his/her attempts to achieve some private consonance in perceptions. Some, it seems, react by seeking refuge in small clique-like family-religious groupings. Others may find the resolution in labour movements. These forms of resolution will be explored fully, since a minimum of social solidarity is essential as a basis for community development in urban areas.

3.5. Proposition 5. We suggest that mounting contradictions are developing around the institution of the family.

3.5.1. Response to Family Planning.

It is a commonly known fact that reproduction in traditional society was given enormous status. This was due firstly to the traditional perception of a person's life as beginning before birth and continuing after death (the living dead), but only as long as a descendent of the dead remained alive to pay respect to the deceased, and secondly, that children within a subsistence system were important as labour to the domestic economy of the family. With the move to the city this perception of the importance of the large family to a greater or lesser degree remains with blacks but with the economic non-viability of large families has caused conflict and constraints within the family.

The Family Planning campaign has, in all good faith, been implemented to alleviate both the problem of over-population and that of economic stress placed on blacks in urban townships. It appears that in many ways it has failed and in others has created yet another source of anger among blacks as they perceive yet another way in which whites attempt to impose on their lives.

This is not a question that the researchers planned to deal with but in many areas of questioning spontaneous responses relevant to Family Planning arose. There was apparent a far greater support of this campaign amongst women, as might be expected, especially married women. For many men, however, there was a strong negative response related to what they perceive as another area of white malicious intervention to 'run the lives of blacks'.

The researchers would like to deal with this question formally in order to establish what detailed perceptions and understanding of family planning and the role of children exist in changing black society.

### 3.5.2. Response to the Definition of the Family.

In traditional society the kinship structure served to stabilise all aspects of life and indeed formed the basis of clan, tribe and community, but with increasing urbanisation the family structure has been fragmented and in many cases reduced first to the nuclear structure and under the impact of urban dislocation and migrant labour to a fragmented nuclear pattern. In response to a question on the family the predominant trend was a definition of the family as 'nuclear' - no mention was made of aunts, grandparents, brothers-in-law, etc. If this is the case the researchers hope to establish to what extent the change in the perception of the family structure has resulted in an intensifying relationship between parents and children or alternatively, perhaps the cause for a rift 'generation gap' - to develop in the family. In either case, the effect of the breakup of the extended kinship structure on the values of urban blacks will be further researched, particularly as they bear upon the important area of parents as role models and sources of socialisation, as in the middle class western family.

### 3.6. Proposition 6. The role of women is changing more rapidly than the values prescribing appropriate behaviour for women.

With the dissolution of the kinship structure and the need for both parents to work within an urban family, the role of the mother and

wife has changed radically. Complicating this change is the high rate of single mothers supporting families both morally and economically, due to absentee fathers.

In a teaching interview situation the students were presented with a picture of a woman and child which in no way represented wealth, status or the background of the woman. Students were asked to describe the scene in the picture. Although no man was shown in the picture, 12 out of 23 respondents mentioned the father and in no case was the description of the father in any way positive - "not working" and "drinking a lot of liquor", "her husband does not support her and her baby", "her husband left her when she was three months pregnant". In all cases the mother was perceived as the source of love and comfort and in 9 cases as the sole provider. An unprompted response was that of the mother as playing the leading role in motivating education in the child; she not only educated the child in babyhood, but both instilled in the child the importance of education and economically provided for such education. She too was the source of advice for the child.

It appears then that the mother has taken over the many roles previously played by the father. In another collection of responses to 'Mothers are ...' only 3 out of 116 were negative - 'always scolding us', but in 51 percent of the cases the mother was the source of warmth and support as well as the guardian and protector.

The researchers are interested in ascertaining the effect of such a change in role structure within the family on children who are not only faced with a hostile environment in the townships, but also deprived of the disciplinary figure that the father has always been in traditional society. Most importantly, however, values in this area will be explored in order to see whether or not women are able to act 'legitimately' in their new roles or whether these are hampered by older value-systems.

- 3.7. Proposition 7: Despite the fact that black people in many cases have lifted themselves out of deprivation, tastes characteristic of greater economic security have not yet emerged. The 'intrinsic' is still non-evident in the perception of art, the way time is spent, the needs of the individual in terms of expressing, creating or collecting for oneself. Rather cultural development has been based on the lack of both time and money which has effected a fairly direct 'use value'

orientation for art in traditional society as well as black urban society. (The arts are a luxury, the "intrinsic" is learned, there has been insufficient leisure for blacks to learn this response.) This suggestion follows the notion of a hierarchy of needs as presented by the psychologist Maslow.<sup>7)</sup>

In interviews with 117 students on hobbies, for example, it was found that 22 percent did not have a hobby to speak of. Twenty-eight percent had as a hobby an active sport and 15 percent enjoyed music, either to listen to or to play. All other activities (karate, church, study, watching films and television, crafts or listening to the radio) were below 10 percent. 'Collecting' was mentioned once (green stamps) and crafts twice. This small sample of responses suggests strongly that even these relatively very well-educated blacks have little interest in fairly typical hobbies typical among whites (painting, collecting stamps, coins, pictures, acting, debate). Rather, hobbies mentioned were usually ones that, if active, were part of group activity but were more often passive and orientated towards relaxation and recuperation.

This was further spelled out when 40 students were asked "When work is over I most like to ...". The highest response was 'rest' or passive activities (57 percent) and only one person in this case mentioned an active sport. The remaining responses reflected the need for 'study' and to 'loiter around with friends'. These responses clearly suggest that the 'no time or money' factor has a large influence on the fact that blacks do not indulge in self-oriented artistic, or creative activities. The limited time they have to themselves is spent in rest or passive entertainment. The "intrinsic" pastimes can, of course, be viewed as particular to a privatistic white middle class or bourgeois culture not worthy of emulation. It is these activities, however, that may stimulate attitudes favouring attention to detail and form in non-ritual activity which competitive success in the 'modern' world demand. Since blacks desire the civilised standards, a further contradiction emerges.

It is the intention of the researchers to further delve into this question to establish to what extent black aspirations are directed

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7) A.H. Maslow "Higher" and "Lower" Needs in *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 25 1948, pp. 433 - 436.

towards the 'in itself' and what advantages are seen in the development thereof. Further it is intended to research the concept of 'quality' in this regard as well as the effect quality consciousness has in the buying motivation of black consumers since the notion of quality can be either one of longer-term utility or an intrinsic concern.

- 3.8 Proposition 8: If the 'in itself' or intrinsic element is not recognised as readily amongst blacks as among whites then this has a crucial bearing on the value of education as it presently exists for blacks. If an immediate or superficial<sup>8)</sup> 'use value' is the predominant element recognised by blacks, then the education provided for them is not serving the purposes recognised as important by blacks themselves. At the same time the emphasis that blacks place on education is enormous. In the anxiety to allay any doubts about their 'civilisation', blacks are aspiring to a system that adheres to white norms and needs. This gives rise to a contradictory situation in which blacks may not have the tools to cope with a system of education that requires for successful adaptation to it a kind of unquestioning respect of its content in itself. This can involve an 'appreciation of literature and art' and the development of a wide range of intrinsic sensitivities and secondly of an interest in certain subjects that are not directly or specifically related to skills or a specific job. Education, therefore, may not be seen as serving as valuable a use function at this time as the typical South African black would in one sense prefer it to do. Yet, this requirement cannot be easily formulated because it would mean relinquishing the demand for education 'equal' to that of whites.

In answer to 'what is the purpose of education?' more than 50 percent of the respondents insisted that it improves the possibility of getting better jobs and salaries, and among just less than half of these respondents, education is the exclusive, single factor that enables the acquisition of a good job. Yet blacks are not leaving school with skills most appropriate for better jobs. Another kind of use-value is also emphasised, one serving identity and status needs. Forty percent of the respondents maintained that education served to

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8) We wish to emphasise that the immediacy of use-value is an important qualification. Longer run use-values are so diffuse and difficult to determine that the utilitarian-intrinsic distinction becomes blurred.

improve the social awareness and status of blacks and to 'civilise' them. Collective self-blame seems to lie at the roots of this; blacks do not feel able to contribute to or make demands on the system unless they adhere to white norms within a white-ruled society. It appears, however, that 'ultimate' aspirations lie outside of the white 'ladder of success'. This will be discussed presently.

Only some 10 percent of respondents when asked the question "What does education do for a person" replied firmly and clearly that it "developed the individual" and "broadened awareness". Group emphasis clearly does not lie in this direction; students do not have the privilege or luxury to view education in this light - rather, the value is that education must first serve to improve social conditions by improved jobs and wages and general social status for the group. The fact, however, that this response exists among a minority shows that some blacks have internalised to some extent this 'intrinsic' definition of education. It is impossible to say at this point how 'intrinsic' these minority concepts of education are or to what extent it is a rationalisation of use-value (as indeed it may be for whites as well).

#### 4. COGNITIVE ASPECTS: DEFINITIONS OF INSTITUTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL PROCESSES.

In a relatively stable social order, popular definitions of institutions accord broadly with the actual roles of these institutions in the society. Severe problems can arise in highly complex societies, however, as in the United States where numbers of studies reveal a steady decline in public trust in the major institutions of government and civic administration. In a divided society like that of South Africa, which additionally is almost as complex in its structures as any advanced Western state, the issue of how institutions are defined and perceived is singularly important, both to the potential stability of the society and to the morale of the population. A population existing with a set of perceptions of institutions which is incongruent with their actual functions and the benefits they do or potentially could provide, is likely to face severe adaptive problems.

4.1 Trust in Basic Institutions. South Africa is a low-trust society in terms of black definitions of major institutions. While this is a hypothesis, there exists so much supporting evidence of an impressionistic kind that it is hardly in doubt. What will be explored, however,

are the detailed perceptions which reduce trust in major institutions like government, education, the law, health services, the professions, industry, etc., etc. By now it is a truism to state that trust in law among blacks has been severely reduced by the use of law and the courts as coercive instruments in the general control of black population movement to and from the cities. Research conducted for the Ciskei Commission has provided ample empirical support for this.<sup>9)</sup> The extent to which similar processes may have occurred in regard to other major institutions will have to be carefully explored, as will be the processes, perceptions or attitudes underlying the patterns.

- 4.2. Perception of Surplus. In a traditional setting without markets or adequate storage and transportation, work for blacks was not 'labour' but a life action and there was a recognition of the need to do as much work as was necessary to meet the need of the season and the community. Related to this is the concept of time in a traditional setting within which the future was expressed as short and unimportant. Time was now. Time was not a boundary to which work was restricted or expanded; rather time could be shortened or lengthened depending upon the needs placed on work. 'Extra' production was irrelevant.

A linguistic factor is of interest: a translation of 'efficiency' into Zulu is 'ukuba nekhona lokwenza' which means 'to have the ability to do'. It is also covered by various words 'nekhono' (ability) or 'nesandla' (with care) or 'qeqesheka' (to be polished or civilised' - in common usage). There is however no single word in Zulu that covers the main notion of efficiency; i.e. efficacy with economy. The Zulu words appear to emphasise only the efficacy.

On the basis of the suggestion contained in the linguistic example the researcher asked 60 students whether they were acquainted with the word 'efficiency' - none were. Here one must note that they were all involved in advanced secondary education and that 50 percent of them were workers, some at fairly advanced white-collar levels.

When they were presented with a story about the demands made on factory workers to constantly improve their work in order to produce more products, however, the general complaint was 'they

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9) "Political Alternatives for the Ciskei: Political Attitudes and Values among Xhosa-speaking Africans of Ciskeian Origin or Residence", in *The Quail Report Feb 8 80*, Report of the Ciskei Commission, Conference Associates (Pty) Ltd., Pretoria.

think we're machines' and 'we make more, but we don't get paid more'. Here the notion of increased output per person does appear, but certainly not as a value. This, of course, may be an entirely justified view but could also conceal a lack of a perception which is basic to the modern economy. The investigators consider that these types of concepts require further investigation in order to ascertain to what extent blacks in different social groups have a secure grasp of these concepts. It is also necessary to relate the cognitive meanings to patterns of attitudes to the work situation.

- 4.3. Perceptions of leadership. In a question on leadership given to 22 respondents there was a distribution of responses suggesting that leadership was perceived as ascribed as well as achieved. In other questions it was clear that whites, in many cases, were seen as weak leaders, and that real leadership is "mostly occurring among blacks".

Further research is required in this area because it was not spelled out why whites were weak leaders or in what way they were seen to be weak. It is clear to the researchers that this question is intrinsic to one of the cognitive models used by blacks. It is often the case that in order to explain their discontent, which to them is based on deprivation caused by a white government, they see whites as weak or bad leaders who 'don't know what blacks want' or who 'don't understand blacks'. Naturally, to an unenfranchised community, leadership is of cardinal significance in the struggle for rights. Various models of leadership are possible, however, including 'expressive' or 'spokesmen' leadership, constituency-based leadership resting on mobilised groups, strategic or combative leadership, leadership based on social esteem and status, etc. The view that whites are weak leaders may reflect a fundamentally moral view of leadership. These and other alternative models of leadership will be explored in depth.



- 4.4. Definition of Status: With the advent of urbanisation for blacks a whole new pattern of influences on blacks emerged, the primary one being the experience of a new status-role based no longer on the position prescribed within the kinship structure, but on the individual and his achievements. Again, not only is the importance of personal identity emphasised in the city, but this identity can be developed within an enormous diversity of options. The individual can now make a choice within a structure that allows for varying forms of behaviour, interests and employment.

Although this new role identity offers excitement and interest it also, to a large extent, causes disequilibrium. It is the intention of the researchers to identify the areas in which blacks respond positively to their city-based status possibilities and, as a corrolary, to what extent they are experiencing doubt and frustration as aspirations are 'nipped in the bud' due to the limitations of their material conditions and the legislation under which they live. With these responses as basis, it will become clearer how cognitive models have been developed in order to cope with the constraints and opportunities in modern urban black living.

- 4.5 Legitimation of wealth.

In the cases of whites acquiring wealth outside of that prescribed by occupational, professional or educational positions, there has been a need to justify such singular wealth. On the one hand an indulgence in and development of fine taste and the 'appreciation of the arts' allows for this category of person to be absorbed into a group that excels in these pursuits, giving wealth a genteel aura. Furthermore, 'good works' and charity justify great wealth - the redistribution to society of a part of what has been taken from it. What would a black person, who has great wealth but little intrinsic status, power, education or a distinct occupation, do with his or her wealth in order to legitimise it? The adequate legitimation of material achievements may be an important source of success-motivation in modern society.

- 4.6. Awareness of Key-processes within a modern System.

Due to segregation leading to the limited recourse blacks have to understand the structures within the white system of government

and administration they are alienated from the system and experience a certain helplessness in dealing with many day-to-day situations. This gives rise to certain contradictions within the models they use to explain the situation in which they find themselves.

Within many interview situations the researcher posed questions about the structures of various parts of the system be they educational, occupational or economic. It was found time and again that blacks' understanding of the government structure was confused. Below are a few examples indicating the extent to which confusion and misunderstanding at a very basic level can develop as a result of this non-acquaintance with the system.

In interviews with students about government it was found to be common that South Africa was seen to have two governments, one black and one white, each of which were responsible for each race group. Due to the fact that the reality of a white government with overriding, central power was not seen, all blame was heaped on this 'black government' which was not improving conditions in black education. The confusion arose, no doubt, from a misconception about the homeland policy.

In discussions about inflation, for example, it was clear that the majority of respondents understood this to be literally a tyre full of air. In a question in a group about the rising cost of living, a strong response was that it was one way whites had found to reclaim wage increases by increasing the price of bread and milk, rents and transport. It was noticed that no similar anger was expressed in relation to costs of furniture or clothing! As a result these respondents agreed that they experienced a certain helplessness in developing economically regardless of their development educationally or in the work situation.

It was clear throughout interviews that students were unaware of the different departments of education, in what way they functioned and for whom. In a group discussion at one school all students insisted that their parents built all schools for blacks because of their yearly contribution to the 'building fund'. Criticism for the 'government' (variously defined) was strong for not assisting in any way to alleviate the situation.

The intention in the final interviews is to present key questions from each area of life (work, transport, inflation, education, G.S.T., university entrance requirements, rentals, taxation, etc.) in order to ascertain to what extent non-acquaintance with the system has contributed to a confusion in the explanations blacks employ to describe their environment.

5. LINGUISTIC CODES AND THEIR POSSIBLE RELEVANCE TO ADAPTATION.

The urban environment which is presented to the individual of achieved or aspirant middle-class is one in which rational explanation and logical connections between events are assumed to be keynote features. This applies strongly in more advanced levels of high-school education and beyond and in technical, administrative and executive roles in the modern economy.

Basil Bernstein<sup>9)</sup> has drawn the attention of sociology to the distinctive differences between ideal-typical working class and middle-class modes of verbal communication in the West. His propositions are that there is a distinction between a 'restricted' language code used typically by the poorer classes (closely allied to what he calls public language) and an 'elaborated' code more typical of the middle class mode of communication (alternatively termed 'formal' language).

The restricted code is characterised inter alia by logical simplicity, lack of generality in its reference, lack of explicit exposition of principles to which particular events are related, a categorical emphasis which fails to communicate nuances and shades of meaning, communication of fact rather than process, a failure to clearly distinguish between cause and effect and a reliance on what he terms the expressive symbolism of gesture and tone rather than extended language use in order to convey exact shades of meaning. The elaborated and formal codes, on the other hand, emphasise process, causality and precision of meaning, and are therefore assumed to be most appropriate in higher education and in more complex occupational roles.

Bernstein, in his later writings, has hastened to assure his readers that the codes referred to are not to be confused with dialect, grammar (or, we may add, any particular language). Within dialects, e.g. Scottish, or

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9) Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, New York, Schocken Books, 1975.

within sub-cultures (and again we may add, within non-Western culture) the distinctions in linguistic precision occur. It is clear that what Bernstein finally intended to propose is that no matter how variant, deviant or colloquial the language being used, at another level, the efficacy of the language could be assessed in terms of the elaborateness of its code.

Transposed to the South African situation, therefore, one might, by extension, pose the question of what variations in code occur within, say, Zulu, or English or Afrikaans. We are not assuming any inevitable correlation between proficiency in English and the use of a formal or elaborated code.

However, in Africa, the Western white group has introduced the technological, analytic and rational mode of explanation. The Western white group has also probably introduced the emphasis on deliberate rationality and explanation in the socialisation of children. Here we refer only to the typically middle class pattern. Elsewhere, the same function has been performed by other groups; perhaps, for example, among the Mandarins in China, the Russians in the Soviet Union, the Samurai in Japan, the Brahmins in India, etc.

A characteristic of English-speaking colonial Africa and of South Africa has been strict racial segregation. The middle class colonial or white South African administrator/entrepreneur groups have been role models (albeit disliked) but at a great social distance. Education in formal school systems has served to offer what everyone, whites included, have believed to be the essential principles of western technological culture. Great emphasis has been placed on learning English in grammatically correct forms and in acquiring the manners and models of Western pseudo-Christian culture. This process has been successful.

The close intimacy of contact that has occurred in the Spanish and Portuguese colonial systems (albeit only for some blacks) has not been possible in the Anglo-Saxon colonial settings. It is at an infinitely more intimate level of contact that the much more subtle features of linguistic codes (which underlie effective use far more than grammar) and the attitudes to child socialisation associated with these codes, could be absorbed. Segregation has created a partial acculturation and if what Bernstein offers has validity, a vital element may be missing.

Bernstein has been roundly condemned by radical scholars who have argued that his emphasis on the way people speak takes attention off the

iniquities of structural inequality. We would suggest that it is a false distinction to suggest that broad acceptance of Bernstein's paradigm replaces the need to be concerned about structural inequality. We would stress, once again, that the particularly rigid manifestation of inequality in colonial Africa has created a linguistic no-win situation for black people. Whites have displayed their culture as the model of modernity with all the technological symbols to justify this claim yet have prevented the 'non-white' people from ever being able to assimilate what lies at the core of the white elite success in manipulating their social and natural environments. In any event, Bernstein himself argues that compensatory education has to overcome the cultural gulf between middle class and working class idiom in order to be successful.

We are not claiming that the urban culture of segregated black people approximates at the linguistic level to the restricted codes of Bernstein's Cockney Londoners or British working classes. We are simply alerted to the potentially powerful effects on academic and occupational achievement which variations in underlying communication codes may create. It is possible that new classifications would have to emerge for the South African linguistic universe. It is vital to explore this, simply because formal language training, by its emphasis on style and grammar rather than meaning structure, obscures the real problems.

We propose, therefore, to develop pictorial stimuli for which story responses are obtained from highly urbanised black children, urbanising black children and from a small sample of white children. Social status will be a controlled variable. Without imposing Bernstein's categories, but remaining sensitive to them, we would elicit the assistance of linguists in analysing and classifying the code complexity of the responses. Our view would be to formulate approaches at the level of early-learning which may be able to make available to black children, in their own dialects if necessary, some of the features of the language codes which adaptation to a technical environment would require in later life.

#### 6. CONCLUDING REMARK.

This brief preliminary statement reflects the general approach to the substantive dependent variables in the ongoing project which is now proceeding at a more detailed level. No doubt some readers will be disappointed to find that it contains the implied suggestion throughout, that attitudinal and cognitive factors explain the problems of adaptation which black people

experience in white-dominated South African society.

We would like to add immediately, therefore, that the hypothetical observations we have made do not mean that we overlook the effects of discrimination and of the advantages which power and social dominance give to whites. Our general point is simply that power-domination and privilege, especially where it is super-imposed upon initial cultural differences and where it is accompanied by a high level of social segregation, leaves the less-advantaged groups in a society with a double-disadvantage. The first disadvantage is the direct and obvious effects of powerlessness and lack of privilege themselves. These effects and the processes producing them are currently very frequently researched and the general trend of the findings in our view is unassailable.

The second disadvantage is the one we are concerned with specifically in this project. This is the indirect effects of social, economic and political alienation on the values and cognitions of the population groups which have become trapped at levels of partial adaptation. If remedies are to be sought for the problems in South African society, the hidden as well as the obvious injuries inflicted by our racial order have to be understood.



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