

NORMATIVE STRUCTURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN INEQUALITY

Richard S. Willen, Eastern New Mexico University

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a racially segregated society. Its political, economic, and social institutions are founded upon the policy of apartheid. This means that race is the sole criterion for determining people's position in society: their rights, privileges, immunities, and opportunities. Participation in controlling political processes is reserved to whites. Position in the economy is also allocated in accordance with racial criteria. Socio-legal status is based on racial particularism and a person's membership in a racial group or category determines his place in society.

MODERNIZATION AND PARTICULARISM

There exists a liberal tradition that predicts the gradual demise of this system of racial particularism from the unrelenting pressures of modernization. This point of view has been called the "universalism thesis" (Strokes and Harris, 1978). Such processes, it is argued, will lead to the eventual demise of apartheid and will usher in a social order founded on the criterion that all members of the society, regardless of race, can participate.

Briefly, the universalism thesis states that the fundamental characteristics of a society alter as the society undergoes modernization. Typically, the push towards modernization stems from industrialization and urbanization. Owing to the interrelatedness of the parts of any functioning system, the various components of a society will adapt to the modernizing changes of industrialization and urbanization so that a new social order is attained. This new order is what the universalism theorists term "modern" whereas the old order is termed "traditional." Societal changes accompanying the transition from the traditional to the modern affect the social institutions of the family, religion, and politics. An extended family gives way to a more mobile and achievement oriented nuclear family which is better adapted, so the argument goes, to the needs of industrial society. Religious values and ethics also change to accommodate the demands for labor and discipline of a "rational" economy. Democracy replaces other political

forms as contractual relations are more functionally suitable than status-based social relations.

Especially important to modernization are changes in social solidarities. Particularistic and local loyalties and identities are transcended by a national solidarity and identity. Individualism replaces collective forms of association as people's identities are determined by their achievements in a national economy instead of being ascribed by local and blood ties. All the members of society, then, are included in a single societal community. They become participants in a national economy and a national polity united by a common identity or a universal system of national symbolism.

Industrialization and urbanization have occurred in South Africa there. A national economy exists which has, to a large extent, replaced the subsistence economy of the non-white population. It has often been argued that this national economy in which all groups (white and nonwhite) participate is a structural contradiction to racial particularism in society, especially regarding socio-legal status restrictions placed on the racial minority groups. South Africa has moved in the direction of a modern society, but the exclusion of non-whites from full social and political status creates a strain. Specifically, the nonwhites are alienated from the system in which they participate which fosters conflict and disruption.

However, South Africa has prevented the pressures of modernization from undermining racial particularism. Indeed, not only has racial particularism remained intact but, even more, it has received its greatest development, articulation and refinement as modernization has proceeded. In other words, it has developed in response to those very forces which the liberal tradition has argued would undermine it.

We will explore the reasons for this paradox to understand why racial particularism has increased with the progress of modernization. The situation in South Africa will be compared with that of 16th and 17th century England

whose social particularism did succumb to the forces of modernity. Both societies are composed of multiple social groupings. In England, those social groups were religious whereas in South Africa they are primarily racial. Full membership and socio-legal status in English society was contingent upon membership in the Anglican Church. In South Africa, full membership is contingent upon particularist credentials, white racial status.

Where multiple social groupings exist, society is faced with the task of creating and maintaining social and moral unity out of diversity (Parsons, 1971). Such unity is present when the various groups are normatively regulated or defined with reference to each other. Two logical alternatives to normative regulation may be suggested. First, the normative order may be defined with reference to a single group, excluding other groups from full socio-legal status. Such is the case of South Africa as well as Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England where full socio-legal status is and was based on particularist criteria. Second, the normative order may be defined on the basis of universal criteria inclusive of all groups. Such is the case with modern England, which is the anticipated course of development in South Africa according to the liberal tradition (Robertson, 1971).

In England, the application of traditional norms to novel types of situations (specifically, those of a modernizing economy) resulted in the universalization of those norms. The direction of normative development in South Africa has been the opposite. There, the application of traditional norms to modern economic situations has resulted in even further racial particularism and the refinement of those norms in a manner than orders them "rationally" compatible with modern social processes.

ENGLAND AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

In England, social multiplicity and the particularist conception of society was a direct outcome of the English Reformation of the 16th Century. Papal authority was removed from England and the monarch was granted ecclesiastic supremacy. A negative social reaction then occurred against Papists and non-conformists (Protestant dissenting sects). Non-Anglican religious groups were excluded from the rights and privileges typically granted

full societal members. The Corporation and Test Acts had the effect of excluding non-Anglicans from serving in Parliament or holding other public offices by requiring an oath of allegiance to the monarch: a declaration repudiating worship of the Virgin and the Catholic rites. Those refusing to swear could "be deemed and adjudged a popish convict to all intents and purposes?" (Willen, 1971:223).

After the Bloodless Revolution of 1688, the Toleration Act, formally entitled "An act for exempting their Majesties protestant subjects, dissenting from the church of England, from the penalties of certain laws," was passed. The political aspect of toleration was expressed in the statutes's preamble: "Foreasmuch as some ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion may be an effectual means to unite their majesty protestant subjects in interest and affection..." (Willen, 1977:224). The act relieved Dissenters from the effects of several acts, which required uniformity of worship and imposed various other restrictions and disabilities, provided they subscribe allegiance to the Monarch and to Christianity. The Toleration Act was the beginning of religious toleration. Dissenters pledged allegiance to King William and Queen Mary in exchange for certain basic social and political rights.

Full toleration was achieved when religious content was removed from the definition of societal membership. This gradual process took well over a hundred years. During the course of the eighteenth century, religious allegiance remained but was universalized beyond Anglican religious belief and membership.

From 1820 to 1850, Parliament repealed restrictions against Roman Catholics, Protestant dissenters, and Jews. Thus, a situation of cultural pluralism or religious denominationalism was achieved in England by the middle of the 19th Century. Societal membership, including the criterion for full membership status in society, together with the rights, privileges, and immunities appertaining thereto, apolitical. With the development of religious toleration, laws became applicable to all. Hence, the rights of all citizens were legally enforced and guaranteed, in principle. Political universalism replaced religious particularism.

RACIAL PARTICULARISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

An analogous situation of toleration has not developed in South Africa. Instead, a trend almost diametrically opposed to that of England has taken place, specifically, the institutionalization of race as the basic criterion for social and political status in society. Such condition has received expression in numerous statutory enactments and, especially, in the concept of apartheid (Carter, 1959; Lemon, 1976).

During the Dutch domination in South Africa, 1652-1795, the problem of a multi-racial society was different from that which eventual developments were to bring about. The status of the nonwhite population was that of a conquered nation. The labor needs of the colonist's plantations and mines were to a large extent externally supplied by slaves imported from tropical Africa, Madagascar, and Southeast Asia. According to Legassick, "the maintenance of separate areas with distinct productive relations, necessary for a section of the workforce, formed the basis of the *racial* policy of segregation" (Legassick, 1974:7).

British domination of South Africa dates from 1795 to 1910. Africaner decedents of Dutch colonials and the British preserved independent identities up to the present. The Africaners founded the Orange Free State and South African Republic in the interior of the country leaving the Cape Colony to the British. Thus, in South Africa, there were and still are two distinct white cultural or ethnic groups in addition to the different nonwhite groups.

Whereas the Africaners excluded nonwhites from social participation, the British applied their own institutions to South Africa resulting in liberalizing tendencies unknown and unacceptable to the Africaners. The British emancipated the slaves and abolished state control over religion. They introduced parliamentary government and universal suffrage, though with economic and educational qualifications. "Whether it was fully realized or not, the system pointed logically towards the progressive incorporation of members of non-white communities into the political process" (Thompson, 1966:25).

In 1910, South Africa gained independence from Great Britain and the Union of South Africa was formed. The liberalizing tendencies apparent under British rule were halted and re-

versed. Subsequent to unionization, the government, through legislation, has largely succeeded in its attempt to create a caste society based on race.

SOCIOPOLITICAL EXCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The underlying conditions of segregation and the caste order are, broadly, economic, political, and sociocultural. Economically, the effect of industrialization was the creation of a national economy to the detriment and eventual demise of the native blacks' subsistence economy. All population groups of South African society have been brought into an economic interdependence which has intensified contact between whites and nonwhites. The racial legislation of the twentieth century regulates this contact, and especially, secures for the whites an economic advantage in the competition for jobs between black Africans and the Africaner labor class (Greenberg, 1980).

In the 1920s, economic competition was a political issue. The Nationalist Party, representing Africaner interests, capitalized on the economic issue. The Nationalists gained political dominance largely through their appeal to the economic interests of the "poor white" Africaners who had migrated from the country to the cities. In the cities, these Africaners were considerably impoverished and in competition for jobs with nonwhites. Race acquired a heightened symbolic significance functioning to insure the economic advantage of the whites Africaner labor class and to place the Africaner Nationalist Party in a politically dominant position (Stokes and Harris, 1978; Thompson, 1966).

A salient political justification given for the exclusion of nonwhites from political processes is white, particularly Africaner, fear that the universalization of the franchise and the extension of rights and privileges more generally would jeopardize South African society, especially the position of the Africaners (Brotz, 1977). Arguments have been made that exclusion is necessary not only for the preservation of Africaner identity as a people but for the institutions which white culture has implanted in South Africa. A major reason given at the time when residential segregation was formally established through the Group Areas Act was the

fear of miscegenation, a fear later reaffirmed by the Immorality Act and the Prohibition of Intermarriage Act.

COMPARISON OF DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of religious toleration in England was tied to the structural separation of the political system from religion, and changes in modes of cultural legitimation (Willen, 1977). Religious toleration involved the inclusion of non-conformist religious groups into a single social structure along with the dominant Anglicans. Such inclusion involved the objectification of legal membership status at a level of generality beyond religion. One state of development was the generalization from Anglican religious membership to Protestant religious membership. Anglican religious credentials once required for full political and social status was replaced by the broader category of Protestant religious credentials. Eventually, with the Nineteenth Century toleration acts, political affiliation alone superseded all religious allegiances as the sole basis for socio-legal status in English society.

Developments in normative culture were also important for religious toleration. Normative culture including general cultural meanings and symbols provide legitimacy to social relationships as well as statutory regulations. The identity of the societal community with full societal membership and socio-legal status with the Anglican religion was legitimated by the conception of the divine and "natural" obedience due to a sovereign from the subject. Toleration, on the other hand, received legitimacy from first, social contract and, eventually, utilitarian conceptions. Social contract notions, pointing towards a separation of church from state, were reflected in the special loyalty oaths required of religious nonconformists during the latter part of the 17th and 18th Centuries. Utilitarian ideas later became apparent. Interference of the government in matters of private conscience was regarded as unwarranted, except insofar as to preserve the autonomy of that private sphere. Involved here was a differentiation of the state and the individual, that is, a cultural definition of the individual as more than a political being.

Modernization in South Africa, specifically, the development of a national economy in

which all groups participate, has made intergroup contact a routine state of affairs. The effect of such intergroup contact, in conjunction with racial particularism has intensified intergroup conflict. The English overcame similar disruptive social forces by including all groups under a common political umbrella, specifically, granting full socio-legal status to all. South Africa has resisted moves toward universalism. Nationalists have increased efforts to confine socio-legal status in particularist racial terms. Constitutional democracy has come to be confined exclusively to whites. Skilled jobs are reserved for whites, non-skilled jobs for nonwhites. As the demands for skilled workers increase, entire categories of work are simply reclassified: The color bar is moved up (Stokes and Harris, 1978).

The containment of universalism pressures was illustrated vividly during the constitutional crisis of the 1950s. In 1952, the highest court of South Africa (Appeal Court) reviewed the constitutionality of a Parliamentary act removing the Cape Coloured from the common franchise (Separate Representation of Voters' Act, 1951) and the procedure used in the passage of the act. The Appeal Court nullified the law and stated that the precedent used to justify the law's passage (a 1937 court decision) was unconstitutional because that decision (Carter, 1959:128) "enabling Parliament to deprive, by a bare majority in each House sitting separately, individuals of rights which were solemnly safeguarded in the Constitution of the country." The Nationalists then pushed through Parliament the High Court Act creating the High Court of Parliament "with power to adjudicate finally on the validity of laws passed by Parliament" (Carter, 1959:129). Nationalists insured that substantive concerns of *voklswil* or Africaner interests would not be subordinated to constitutional questions. The High Court provided the mechanism for the removal of the Cape Coloured from the common franchise.

CONCLUSION

The conflict between the two groups of South African whites: Africaner and English-speaking has been highly significant for the direction of racial particularism in South Africa. Africaner Nationalist political dominance has been heavily dependent on the symbolism of

the Africaner cultural heritage. A pervasive ideology of the Nationalist Party and the Africaner people has been the threat posed to that heritage from nonwhites. However, the heightened articulation of that cultural heritage during the present century was perhaps as much if not more a result of conflict with English-speaking South Africans, who were politically dominant from unionization in 1910 until 1948, were regarded as a threat to Africaner culture as represented by the English dominance of such institutions as language, economics, politics, and education. Thus, it was the Africaner response to the threat posed by English domination that led to the increased affirmation of that symbolism. Its retention thereby became a major political objective once Africaner political ascendance was attained.

The liberals typically associated with the English South African ethnics and the Nationalists have been in disagreement not over the principle of segregation but the means of its achievement. In contrast to the Nationalists, liberal policies, proposals, and criticisms have been based on the need to develop ideals of democratic universalism (Robertson, 1971).

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