

Flame or Lily? Revisited: A Response and Elaboration of Rhodesian Racial Attitudes

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My book *Flame or Lily?*¹ was written out of my enthusiasm for the potential insight provided by the white press into white Rhodesian culture, although I was aware that such data do not provide 'perspectives on the society as a whole, nor the white elite in general' (p.2). Rather, these editorials provide 'a restricted definition of Rhodesian culture . . . which may very well reflect the white elite in general' (p.6). Instead of attempting yet another interpretation of Rhodesian history, I was concerned with presenting the views of white editors over time in order to gain some insight into how these particular Rhodesians defined their situation over time as participants in the society's major media institution. My focus, then, was on their *social definitions of societal reality* rather than my interpretation of these situations for them.

Those who take the work as representing something more than this provide the author, in a sense, with an indirect compliment which he neither sought nor values. More than this, however, they are searching for phenomena which were not intended for inclusion and criticise what they do find on the basis of essentially irrelevant criteria. Since interpretations of works provided by book reviews are widespread in circulation and vary so greatly in content and orientation that often the author is

hard-pressed to recognise his own material, it is necessary to respond to this kind of evaluation in order to ensure the clarity of his original aims, particularly for the large majority of the academic audience which does not actually read his work.

The above reasons compel me, therefore, to respond to the vitriolic review of my book in *Zambezia*² and indeed to a similar review in *Rhodesian History*.³ In the following discussion I shall deal with these reviewers' major criticisms in turn and move, in the second part, to a further elaboration of the interpretation provided in the book, in an attempt to develop a fuller model of Rhodesia's historical development as revealed in my recent sub-analysis of these newspaper data.

THE REVIEWS

The two reviews focus, in my opinion, on three major facets; the methodology of the book, its probable effects on the Rhodesian population, and, thirdly problematic terms and titles.

Methodology

First, Maguire wishes I had empirically assessed the influence of newspapers in Rhodesian society with respect to factors such as

circulation and readership. I agree that this would have been an advantage, but in view of dearth of funds and facilities it was impossible. In any case, considering the size of Rhodesia's white population and heavy dependence on the press for information, at least in the past, it seems to me that the central role of this media in Rhodesia's historical development is obvious. Furthermore, my concern was in analysing the *content* of the white press rather than its *effects*.

Both reviewers lament the absence of a formal content analysis approach to the newspaper data, which they view as essential to this kind of exercise. I gave such an approach careful thought before proceeding and decided that the superimposition of formal categories, 'analytic concepts' or 'classifications' on the data would add little to the analysis, and in fact might detract from its level of objectivity, and run the risk of predetermined interpretations. Such an issue is, in fact, central to sociological debate in contemporary theory: imposed categories and 'definitions of the situation' may be seen as representing the 'value bias' of a particular kind of social science and researcher while for others it is more important to understand the social definitions from the point of view of the subject himself.⁴ I was more concerned with the latter, to present the editors' views and arguments over time and then attempt their analysis. In this way I hoped to keep my 'apparent value bias' as low as possible and allow the editors to speak for themselves through their editorial statements. I severely question what preconceived formalization would add to the data, apart from offering the researcher a 'bland sense of the reassurance' that he was being scientific. Further, the consistency of the data results convince me that while my approach was rather informal, the results provide the kind of insight I was looking for. In fact, my recent longitudinal analyses of the data reinforce this conclusion.

A further criticism relates to the delineation of 'core values'. Professor Roberts feels that they are 'so vague as to be either blindly obvious or almost meaningless'. This leaves me with the puzzling question of whether I should have attempted to rewrite these values into more concise terms or place them in formal categories? Core values, I believe, are general by definition, particularly in the mass media,

and I was concerned with revealing how the editors described them rather than interpreting them for these writers. 'Bland, unexceptional truisms' may be unattractive but they exist in these data and the aim of my analysis was to reveal them rather than analyse their relation to particular historical and political contexts — another kind of focus entirely. In short, the reviewers were obviously looking for a preconceived, formal kind of analysis and interpretive framework, an approach I had no intention of taking in view of the dangers of subjective and academic distortion of the data. The issue of 'proper' interpretation was one I wished to avoid.

Effects

Secondly both reviewers are concerned with the possible effects the book may have on the general population. Maguire accuses me of an 'apparent value bias towards political stability' and feels the work will reassure the European Rhodesians, while Roberts states that my (?) truisms would be equally acceptable to apartheid supporters and political radicals. A number of points are raised here: I was concerned more with the value biases of the editors than my own and, secondly, it is difficult if not impossible to assess the effects of a particular publication on the population at large. It would be useful if Maguire could provide some empirical evidence for 'determining the amount of influence' involved here. Groups utilise particular points of view for their own purposes and whether they are disappointed, depressed, dismayed or reassured, it seems to me that their reaction depends on their position in the society and is their own problem. Anyhow, this question has little relevance to the work at hand.

Roberts's point that the core values apply to both ends of the political spectrum is exactly what I was attempting to demonstrate in my delineation of the ambivalence of these values. The white press elite, in my opinion, is ambivalent: it perceives Africans as having a right to political participation but in a manner which is 'civilised' and limited by the general control of the white political elite. This ambivalence is a central ingredient in colonial race relations, a factor we shall discuss further. However, Roberts appears to miss this entirely. Once again, it seems that these readers are looking for a kind of analysis which was never intended in the first place and thereby miss the

approach I was attempting.

Terms and Titles

Thirdly both writers are concerned over my use of the term 'minority' in reference to Africans and other non-whites. This simply astounded me, for I thought it was obvious that by 'minority' I was referring to the low (that is, discriminatory) political, social, and economic position accorded these groups by the white elite, and not in any sense to their level of importance or relevance. The term 'minority' is clearly defined in so many works in contemporary social science it surprises me that this confusion could arise. However, the obvious concern with it is sociologically indicative of a sensitive situation in race relations.

Finally, Roberts is not clear what the book's title is 'meant to convey' although the meaning is spelled out clearly enough in the last chapter of the book as other reviewers have indicated.

My general response to these two reviews, then, is that the readers were searching for a kind of analysis I did not intend and evaluated what I presented in reference to these pre-conceived criteria. I can understand how, in the usual academic tradition, they were looking for an interpretive, formalistic piece of work which presented a particular point of view and then attempted to document it. However, my intentions were to move away from this approach. To criticise my work in these traditional terms is largely missing the point, as the gap between their objections and my intentions clearly reveals. Moreover, their views are articulated within the context of a conflict-ridden racial situation making them particularly sensitive to certain kinds of data and points of view. Concern over my perceived use of the term 'minority', emotional reactions such as disappointment, depression, and dismay, as well as the attempt to parody the book's title, are all indicative, so it seems, of a particular group's (dare I say minority's?) position in a social situation which is tense and problematic. Thus, all the major points and reactions are highly specific to these two reviews; and comments on the book in other societies are entirely different, understandably since the reviewer's motives and situation are different. What I am suggesting here is that reviews are also subject to content analysis and provide data which are relevant to a deeper understanding of the

sociology of knowledge.

Having responded to these criticisms, it is important to move to a more constructive level by elaborating the *Flame or Lily?* analysis in light of my recent examination of these data in greater detail.

ELABORATION

Upon reflection and further data analysis, an extension of the original work, requires at least three major elements: a conceptual framework which will handle Rhodesia's historical development; a greater emphasis on a longitudinal analysis of the data in contrast to the largely cross-sectional approach taken in the book; and a greater account of the society's colonial structure, particularly in reference to its subordinate groups, needs to be taken in interpreting these data, which is a point implicit in the reviews just discussed. I shall attempt to discuss each of these factors in reference to some of my recent re-analysis of the data and move towards providing a more sophisticated model of Rhodesia's development.

Conceptual Framework

The basis of a colonial society is its economic structure — the major motivation behind its foundation, subordination of the indigenous population, and importation of other race groups for economic purposes. This structure is behind the racial caste system and its ongoing development as it contributes to social change through the processes of industrialization and urbanization. The changing demands of this structure, it would appear, are extremely viable in defining the changing racial scene as they bring the major race groups together under differing social circumstances. The major effect is that both elite and subordinate groups redefine their orientations to one another over time: the elite begins to see subordinate groups in terms other than representing a labour commodity while these groups begin to reject the legitimacy of that elite's power monopoly as their relative deprivation and consequent level of nationalism emerge in response to economic change. The economic system, it seems to me, is primary in any explanation of changing race relations in the colonial situation to the extent of operating over and above the needs and perceptions of its participants, whether elite or not.

Changing economic conditions have been

conceptualized sociologically as ecological frontiers which represent differing contact situations. Lind, for example, has utilised Park's concept of the 'frontier', a term recognizing 'common controlling factors which operate over widely separated areas and conditions of life',⁵ referring to differing patterns of race relations as various kinds of contact and economic pressures impinge on the social system at particular phases of its development. Thus, the varying frontiers on which groups meet, whether trading, plantation, political, urban, or tourist, are related to different kinds of race relations in response to particular kinds of internal contact and economic developments.⁶

Racial 'frontiers', of course, do not remain static but change as their economic structure introduces new demands into the social situation. In specifying the directions of possible change in patterns of race relations, Park is well-known for his cycle concept:

It is obvious that race relations and all that they imply are generally, and on the whole, the products of migration and conquest . . . The interracial adjustments that follow such migration and conquest are more complex than is ordinarily understood. They involve racial competition, conflict, accommodation, and eventually assimilation . . .⁷

If viewed as a 'suggestive hypothesis',⁸ this approach is useful in tracing the emergence of different phases of race relations and possible trends in social change, provided 'assimilation' is not viewed in a physical or linear sense.⁹

Rhodesia's historical development, in my opinion, may be broadly divided into a number of relatively distinct 'frontiers': an initial mining 'frontier' (1890s-1900s), moving through agricultural (1910-1929) and urban 'frontiers' (1930s-1949), to the recent political 'frontiers' (1950s-1970s). Such categories are admittedly crude and general and are used only for general empirical purposes in order to place the newspaper data in a longitudinal framework. Secondly, if one accepts the general directionality of Park's cycle notion, these changing frontiers will result in changing racial orientations among the groups involved. While it is obviously unrealistic to expect assimilation to take place, it is reasonable to expect an ongoing process of redefinition at work in these orientations.

Our conceptual framework, then, is an

economic-ecological approach to be used in tracing Rhodesia's changing patterns of race relations in so far as they are revealed in these newspaper data. It is to this longitudinal analysis that we turn next.

The Longitudinal Analysis

Assessment of the newspaper data in longitudinal perspective is contained in a number of my papers exploring the following topics: sources of pluralism in Rhodesian society, changing racial social types, social definitions of Africans as compared to Asian-Coloureds, and the definition of 'community' and community development. I shall summarize the results of these discussions in that order. Evident in all of these analyses are the dynamic rather than static qualities of the data.

As revealed in the book, the white elite defines itself as a group of 'civilized' and 'industrial' settlers. The initial implications of this identity for pluralism in the society¹⁰ are criticism of the administration, an emphasis on in-group unity, the negative definition and subordination of other race groups, fear of alien immigration, and rejection of external criticism. Such orientations typify the colonial outlook which is ethnocentric regarding 'civilized' standards and industrially exploitive in motivation. These definitions, however, are not static: over time there is an attempt to provide at least limited participation in the political structure for the Africans while more positive acceptance of immigrants develops and political parties are examined for their ability to ensure racial harmony. Ties with South Africa are also strengthened despite political differences and historical conflicts. There is thus some movement towards limited integration rather than complete exclusion although it is obvious on the elite's own terms which assume general control of the large society.

Changing definitions of Africans was the focus of another sub-analysis.¹¹ Early views on the 'Native' during the mining and agricultural frontiers are highly negative and emphasize social control of this group which represents a major labour commodity. During the urban and political periods, however, the editorials change: while still emphasizing the African's inequality and need for segregation, the writers begin to suggest parallel development and, in later years, a constitutional

system based on merit and opportunity for achievement. Major change from the colony's labour problems through the African's welfare needs, to the need for at least a limited form of political participation. According to this analysis, economic factors are closely associated with white views of the African, his needs and relationship to the political system, moving towards at least limited inclusion in that system.

Changing racial attitudes in the press are also evident in regard to the Asian-Coloured group.¹¹ During the mining 'frontiers', Asiatics are considered undesirable and disrespectful. However, in the agricultural period there is more acceptance of this Indian group as local, while the urban 'frontier' brings recognition of the existence of a 'Coloured' population (which is classified with the Asians from this point on) deserving the same attention to educational, housing, and social needs as do the Whites. Finally, editorials during the political 'frontier' emphasize that the Asian-Coloured community does not require separate representation in the Federal system and ought to be considered part of the white community on a franchise and social basis. Once again, changing economic frontiers bring with them a change in racial orientations among the white elite, at least as revealed in these data.

Definitions of community and community development are closely related to the elite's identity as defined earlier.¹² Early definitions differentiate between civilized Whites and barbaric 'natives', with economic and institutional issues being dominant within the former and problems of labour supply among the latter. Once again, however, these views change: problems of an urban African community highlight social welfare needs and, eventually, their right to political participation. Changing 'frontiers', then, result in changing definitions of community and community development problems.

Viewing the data in longitudinal perspective, then, highlights the association between economic 'frontiers' and racial orientations as well as the relative movement towards a more inclusive view of subordinate racial groups. While not dealt with in these data, it has also been evident that subordinate groups have changed their views of the elite, moving from relative conformity to the racial caste system to the recent rise and spread of nationalism. Changing 'frontiers' affect all race groups in a particular

social system, moving towards increasing levels of competition, conflict, and new forms of racial accommodation. It is also evident that while the white elite modifies its views of the subordinate groups under its control, these revisions are on that elite's own terms and in many respects function to maintain its power monopoly. The data thus require consideration in the context of Rhodesia's colonial structure — a topic to which we shall now turn.

Rhodesia's Colonial Structure

Implicit in the two reviews just discussed is the need to take Rhodesia's colonial context into account when considering racial orientations within it. Clearly, the significance of the findings just presented, then requires discussion within the present context of Rhodesian society. It is obvious, for example, that the present political situation, far from emphasizing racial assimilation, is an attempt to prevent such a process. Indeed, Rhodesian politics within the past decade exemplify the nationalistic backlash of a racial minority attempting to preserve and institutionalize its position of political, legal, and economic dominance.¹³ Furthermore, it has been empirically demonstrated during a recent 'frontier' that white Rhodesians are conservative in their racial attitudes.¹⁴ What accounts, then, for apparent differences in orientation between the political elite and the white news media?

Given Rhodesia's colonial structure, I would argue that these differences are more apparent than real, for both groups are conservative in their own way. Thus, while racial definitions in the press change towards the notion of relative assimilation, it is, of course, on the Whites' own terms of civilising the 'natives' who are to be 'advanced' while Coloureds are to be 'helped' to a position of eventual equality. Such multiracialism, of course, is conservative in its maintenance of racial domination since it retains political power in the hands of the 'civilised' White as it attempts to absorb subordinate groups on its own terms and at its own rate. Furthermore, the continuing attempt to reinforce traditional, rural culture may be viewed as a tactic designed to further enhance white control of political and economic power.

Conversely, a movement towards limited assimilation is also evident in the development of a republican constitution which, theoretically

at least, aims at eventual 'parity'. It is obvious that such a plan does not envisage complete assimilation and may be interpreted by some as an attempt to maintain white dominance with the appearance of racial equality. However, such a political system would never have been conceived during earlier 'frontiers', such as the mining and agricultural periods of development. While adjustment to external pressure may have been a factor in such a movement, we would still hold to the view which links 'frontiers' to patterns of race relations, moving towards some form of limited assimilation or accommodation. While the present political scene is far from being equalitarian or non-racist, then, it does show some development away from the strictly exclusive regimes of earlier times. Colonial race relations may thus be both developmental and paternalistic at the same time, resulting in ambivalent attitudes. Such a paradox emphasises the basic colonial dilemma which is outlined so well by Philip Mason:

The conqueror faces a dilemma as soon as the last battle is won. He cannot for ever maintain the high mood of the paeon and the feast; he will wake, with victory sour in the mouth, to a colder light in which he must make peace. And if he is a realist, the kind of peace open to him is never wholly to his liking. This is true of any conqueror; the dilemma is the more poignant if the victor proposes to live in the country of the vanquished.¹⁵

One set of pressures thus recognises the need for some kind of assimilation but meets the resistance of elite conservatism which fears for its own political and economic security. Such role conflict demands some form of accommodation. In the colonial situation this appears to be limited assimilation on the elite's own terms, the result of which is the development of subordinate group nationalism. Race relations in such a setting, it appears to me, represent the interactive effect of changing 'frontiers' on the orientations of both elite and subordinate groups, resulting in a simultaneous attempt by the former to adjust to the changing needs of the latter in the differing context of each 'frontier', while attempting to ensure its security. Subordinate groups, in turn, are radicalized by these economic-political events and come to view the elite and their sub-

ordinate position in a new light. The general result of this elite adjustment and subordinate radicalization is reactionary backlash among the former and radical nationalism among the latter, pushing the race relations scene eventually towards some new form of accommodation. In this manner race relations are dynamic and developmental but remain defined by the parameters of a colonial situation whose elite is desperately attempting to maintain its control of the situation.

Towards a General Historical Model

Having discussed the viability of economic factors in a colonial situation, changing racial orientations over time in the newspaper data, and general characteristics of Rhodesia's colonial structure, it appears appropriate at this point to attempt to draw together our major points in the form of a model of Rhodesia's general historical development. Such a model should in no way be considered definitive, for it is purely explanatory, based, as it is, on limited data and theoretical considerations.

The major independent variable is the society's colonial economic base — the motivation behind the society's colonial foundation and revealed in the elite's self-identity. The initial and changing demands of this system have major implications for changing race relations within the society as a whole, beyond the motives and perspectives of the race groups involved.

As the economic system develops and moves in the direction of increasing industrialization, a number of ecological 'frontiers' are evident which we have delineated as mining, agricultural, urban, and political. The effects of these 'frontiers' on the white elite is a change in orientation towards subordinate race groups from their definition as a labour commodity through the need for parallel development and segregation to political participation on a limited and controlled basis. Views of the various groups change as do definitions of the concept 'community'. Acceptance of immigrants and ties with neighbouring societies also increase. These changes, however, are limited by the conservative motives of the white elite and in some respects may be viewed as attempts to adjust to a changing situation in a manner which will retain their control. Furthermore, the reactions of subordinate groups, while not revealed in these newspaper data, appear to move

from conformity and acceptance to rejection of the colonial system and the development of African nationalism. We thus see adjustment developing on the one hand with rising nationalism on the other.

The interaction of these opposing orientations results in ambivalence and uncertainty among the elite, at least for an initial period. However, under internal and external pressure, reactionary forces come to the fore and conservative white nationalism takes control. Reacting to radical African nationalism, it seems to me, some form of new accommodation will eventually develop out of this interactive process. While it is difficult to make any predictions, it is reasonable to assume that the crucial underlying factors will include the ongoing demands of the economic system, as well as the effects of forces external to the society.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to distinguish two views on the use of historical data: the formal-interpretive versus the analysis of social values from the subject's own perspective. In this elaboration of *Flame or Lily?*, I hope that I have demonstrated that it is a synthesis of both which may provide most insight into Rhodesia's colonial structure and development: it is the society's structural features as they relate to varying and changing social orientations within it that are central to an understanding of its sociological development. Such an approach, it seems to me, demands a multi-level and multi-perspective approach in order to more fully understand the problems created by a colonial social system. Further debate which is constructive rather than negative should contribute further to that understanding if the study of Rhodesia's history is to indeed be dispassionate.

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