

ogies of control and management that masquerade as international law is to deflate the incisiveness of his criticism and to decline his invitation to render the regime accountable. All things considered, Anghie's book is a thoroughgoing account that gives voice to sentiments that seldom see the light of day, let alone are adjudged worthy of dissemination by a prestigious press. The rereading of international law is a useful corrective to conventional perspectives that normalize subjugation and its rationalization by any means necessary.

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Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation? By James L. Gibson. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004. Pp. 488. \$47.50 cloth.

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Gibson's ambitious goal is to assess the success of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) not only in reducing this nation's racial divide, but also in increasing South Africa's political tolerance, its support for human rights, and the legitimacy of its governing political institutions. He rises to this challenge by analyzing the results of a landmark 2000–2001 survey of nearly 4,000 South Africans. Gibson is cautious but not shy in delivering a bottom-line assessment. He finds that nearly one-half of the South African population entered the new millennium expressing some degree of reconciliation. Given the challenges of overcoming apartheid, the TRC, according to Gibson, has likely delivered as much as could be expected.

The reader learns much across the chapters of this book: that reconciliation is a measurable construct, that interpretive truth is critical in creating a collective memory, that intense contact among members of conflicting subgroups can help achieve reconciliation, that the creation of a human rights culture—among the populace and the government—is both a backward- and forward-looking process, that intolerance is a social and not an individual-level characteristic, that amnesty can be a powerful source of perceived injustice, and that public institutions that serve as the backbone of a democracy must develop a substantial degree of legitimacy.

Among the strengths of Gibson's accomplishment are the precision of his measurement approach and the cautiousness of his analytic judgments. For example, subdimensions of reconciliation

are scaled in a manner that allows Gibson to estimate levels of reconciliation among national subgroups. When the analysis is taken to this level, he finds that reconciliation characterizes the attitudes of more than one-half of Whites (56%) and Colored people (59%) but only about one-third of Africans. When the variable of language is further introduced, over two-thirds of English-speaking Colored people (75%) and English-speaking Whites (64%) are found somewhat reconciled, compared to less than one-fifth (17%) of Sotho-speaking blacks. The latter nearly four-to-one difference in reconciliation provides good reason for the cautious framing of Gibson's conclusions (p. 332).

Gibson also develops measures of the "truth acceptance" he attributes to the TRC. Here he finds a surprising similarity in the acceptance of the TRC's depiction of apartheid across racial groups, and he attributes this to a complementary acknowledgment and moderation of views across these groups. He can further show that those who are more accepting of the TRC's version of the truth are more likely to be reconciled. He acknowledges that a more convincing demonstration of the causality involved in this relationship would require longitudinal data, which his survey does not provide. Nonetheless, Gibson's use of instrumental variables with his cross-sectional data supports that assumption that the causal flow is indeed from "truth" to "reconciliation." He can then again break this analysis down by subgroups, leading to the finding that the "truth effect" is 0.23 among Africans and 0.53 among Whites. This more than two-to-one difference is added reason for guardedness in Gibson's optimism (p. 334).

A particularly intriguing part of Gibson's contribution involves his assessment of the contact hypothesis as an explanatory mechanism for the level of reconciliation that is evident in postapartheid South Africa. Gibson provides important evidence that the segregation, indeed isolation, especially social-psychological isolation, of Africans from Whites is pervasive in South Africa. In fact, he finds that a majority of African respondents report no contact at all with Whites at work, while nearly half (42%) of Whites nonetheless say they have a great deal of contact at work with Blacks (p. 139)! Nonwork contacts show relationships with reconciliation in Gibson's analysis, and thus he concludes that the effect of greater interracial interaction is to enhance racial reconciliation. Yet he also finds that the contact effects for Africans are far weaker (by about two-thirds) than for Whites, and when it comes to contact at work, there are no significant effects at all for any of the groups. Gibson plausibly speculates that the hierarchical nature of work interactions undermines any likely benefits (p. 140).

In the end, Gibson's optimism about the truth and reconciliation process is grounded in his demonstration that the TRC

advanced the acknowledgment that horrible things were done by both sides in the struggle over apartheid. He attributes some of this success to the *lack* of legalistic proceedings that made the TRC hearings more accessible to ordinary people. Wilson's critique of the absence of accountability associated with the TRC, in his *Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, offers a compelling alternative argument. Gibson does not conclude that Wilson (2001) is necessarily wrong, but rather suggests that theoretically informed empirical measurement and analysis are needed to further advance our understanding of this extraordinarily important issue.

A key part of this issue involves the amnesty that the TRC granted to 850 South Africans. Gibson reports a unique experiment within his survey that suggests that the majority of the respondents under various simulated conditions judge the granting of amnesty as unfair. He observes that retributive justice in particular is sacrificed with the use of amnesty, but he argues that other forms of justice can still be advanced—namely, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. The experimental manipulation of retribution—involving perpetrator remorse and shame rather than a criminal sentence for the offender—is not a very compelling reflection of the role of retribution. For most victims, expressions of shame and remorse will have been too little and too late. The amnesty experiment is creative but ultimately unconvincing with regard to the effects of retributive accountability. This is the exceptional instance in which Gibson's technical acuity, in our judgment, may outdistance substantive demands of the issues at hand.

Gibson's impressive volume marks an important advance in our understanding of the pursuit of truth and reconciliation in South Africa. He modestly summarizes his contribution by suggesting that “this research provides replicable (valid and reliable), quantitative indicators of reconciliation” and that the “important contribution of my approach to reconciliation is in the operationalizations of the concept” (p. 339). This book does much more—its unique accomplishment is the success with which it joins a monumentally important policy initiative with a theoretically informed empirical evaluation of its sociopolitical outcomes. It is fitting that this volume is published under the imprint of the Russell Sage Foundation, an organization that has long supported law and society training and scholarship, and that now is facilitating the dissemination of important results of this investment.

Reference

- Wilson, Richard A. (2001) *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*. New York: Cambridge University Press.