

Does Truth Lead to Reconciliation? Testing the Causal Assumptions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process

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Throughout the world, truth commissions have been created under the assumption that getting people to understand the past will somehow contribute to reconciliation between those who were enemies under the ancien regime. In South Africa, the truth and reconciliation process is explicitly based on the hypothesis that knowledge of the past will lead to acceptance, tolerance, and reconciliation in the future. My purpose here is to test that hypothesis, based on data collected in a 2001 survey of over 3,700 South Africans. My most important finding is that those who accept the “truth” about the country’s apartheid past are more likely to hold reconciled racial attitudes. Racial reconciliation also depends to a considerable degree on interracial contact, evidence that adds weight to the “contact hypothesis” investigated by western social scientists. Ultimately, these findings are hopeful for South Africa’s democratic transition, since racial attitudes seem not to be intransigent.

Throughout the world, nations in transition from authoritarian to democratic governance are having to face the issue of political atrocities committed under the *ancien regime*. A common response to this dilemma is to empanel some sort of “truth commission,” often with the power to grant amnesty to those who come forward and confess their illicit deeds (on the prevalence and nature of truth commissions see Hayner 2000). Truth commissions are based on the hypothesis that knowledge of the past leads to acceptance, tolerance, and reconciliation in the future, and that learning the “truth” will somehow convince citizens to put the past behind and move on toward a more democratic future (although alternative hypotheses are also reasonable). Unfortunately, however,

little systematic evidence exists on the consequences of “truth” for reconciliation.

The “truth hypothesis” is ultimately a macrolevel expectation probably requiring longitudinal data at the level of the nation-state. But the hypothesis also pertains to individual citizens and is testable at the microlevel in the short-term. Testing the hypothesis connecting truth and reconciliation among ordinary South Africans is the purpose of this article. This test of the truth–reconciliation theory is based on data collected in a national survey of approximately 3,700 South Africans concluded early in 2001.

In this article, I: (1) offer both a conceptualization and operationalization of what it means for individual

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This is a revised version of an article delivered at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Hilton San Francisco and Towers, August 30–September 2, 2001. This research is supported by the Law and Social Sciences Program of the National Science Foundation (SES 9906576). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. The project is a collaborative effort between Amanda Gouws, Department of Political Science, the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa), and me. I am indebted to Charles Villavicencio, Helen Macdonald, Paul Haupt, Nyameka Goniwe, Fanie du Toit, Erik Doxtader, and the staff of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (South Africa), where I am a Distinguished Visiting Research Scholar, for the many helpful discussions that have informed my understanding of the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa. I am also thankful to Anthony J. Gill (University of Washington) for his comments on an earlier version of this article. The original paper is the recipient of the Sage Paper Award for the Best Paper in the Field of Comparative Politics presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 2001, Comparative Politics Organized Section, American Political Science Association.

American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 48, No. 2, April 2004, Pp. 201–217

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ISSN 0092-5853

citizens to be “reconciled;” (2) test the theory that truth is associated with variation in reconciliation, as in the hypothesis that those accepting the “collective memory” produced by the truth-finding enterprise are more likely to be reconciled; and (3) investigate the alternative hypotheses that racial reconciliation results from interracial contact and experiences with apartheid (and a host of control variables). Thus, this article addresses one of the most important issues in the comparative study of mass behavior and public opinion: can citizens who have been abused by authoritarian regimes be convinced to put the past behind and reconcile with those who formerly oppressed them?

For many, my findings will be unexpected: Truth, in many instances, *does* contribute to reconciliation in South Africa. The process is not always simple or direct—and black South Africans who are religious are an important exception—but in general those who participate in South Africa’s collective memory by accepting the “truth” about the country’s apartheid past are more likely to hold reconciled racial attitudes. My statistical analysis indicates that this *may* even be a causal relationship, at least among some South Africans. Moreover, reconciliation is indeed enhanced by interracial contact and interaction, an important finding that adds support to the much investigated “contact hypothesis.” Racial isolation appears to be a major impediment to racial reconciliation in South Africa. In general, I conclude that a moderate degree of reconciliation exists in contemporary South Africa, due in part to the activities and findings of the truth and reconciliation process.

In order to provide a context for this analysis, I begin with a brief overview of the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa (for a detailed account see Boraine 2000).

Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created by the new parliament in 1995 by the “Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act” (No. 34, 1995). The goal “of the Commission shall be to promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past” (National Unity and Reconciliation Act, Section (3) (1)). In calling for the TRC to produce as “complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights which were committed during the [apartheid] period” (National Unity and Reconciliation Act, Section (3) (1) (a)), the law explic-

itly addresses the need to create a collective memory for South Africa.

Generally speaking, those who constructed the TRC believed that the production of truth about the past would contribute to reconciliation in the country.¹ National unity and reconciliation could be achieved only, it was argued, if the truth about past violations became publicly known and acknowledged (e.g., TRC, Volume 1, Chapter 4, p. 53). As Hamber and Wilson (n.d.) put it:

Thus a national process of uncovering and remembering the past is said to allow the country to develop a common and shared memory, and in so doing create a sense of unity and reconciliation for its people. By having this shared memory of the past, and a common identity as a traumatised people, the country can, at least theoretically, move on to a future in which the same mistakes will not be repeated.

Thus, a crucial, empirical hypothesis undergirding the truth and reconciliation process is that acceptance of the truth contributes to reconciliation. But just what is “reconciliation?”

The Meaning of “Reconciliation”

Two themes dominate contemporary discussions of the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa. First, no one seems to know what “reconciliation” means. Second, however, everyone is certain that “reconciliation” has failed, or at least has not lived up to the expectations of most South Africans. People may not be able to define and measure the concept, but they seem to think they “know it when they see it,” or at least when they do not see it.

Perhaps “reconciliation” is not such a difficult and complicated concept after all. When people talk about reconciliation, they often mean nothing more than people of different races getting along better with each other—that is, a diminution of racial animosities. This may mean that people come to interact with each other more (the breakdown of barriers across races), communicate more, in turn leading to greater understanding and perhaps acceptance, resulting in the appreciation and exaltation of the value of racial diversity. It is this dimension of reconciliation—the extension of dignity and esteem to those of other races and cultures, through understanding, trust, and respect—that is the focus of this article.

¹The process relies on another causal assumption: without amnesty, truth will not emerge.

In South Africa, the groups that must reconcile are the four main racial groups in the country—Africans, whites, Coloured people, and South Africans of Asian origin.² The root cause of the interracial alienation is colonialism; the proximate cause is of course apartheid. The damage inflicted was that of inequality, the loss of dignity, and untold violence and political repression. Whites treated Africans, Coloured people, and South Africans of Asian origin as if they were inferior in nearly every sense, including in the political and legal domains, and of course blacks were even expelled from their own country to the so-called Bantustans. The essential condition for reconciliation is therefore that South Africans of every race accept all other South Africans as equals and treat them as equal, extending dignity, respect, and co-citizenship to them.

Theory: The Origins of Interracial Reconciliation

The lay hypothesis that truth contributes to reconciliation intersects with two important bodies of theory. “Reconciliation” is the dependent variable for those who have investigated the so-called contact hypothesis; “truth” is very much the focus of analysts of “collective memory.” Both bodies of work have direct relevance to my analysis of South Africa’s truth and reconciliation process.

Interracial Relations and the Contact Hypothesis

A formidable literature exists on the question of whether interracial contact enhances racial harmony. As Sigelman and Welch describe it “Adherents of the contact hypothesis view racial segregation as a source of ignorance and ignorance as a breeding ground for derogatory stereotypes and racial hostility. If stronger social bonds could be forged between blacks and whites . . . racial attitudes would improve dramatically” (1993, 781). Interracial contact is said to provide

direct information regarding the values, lifestyles, behaviors, and experiences of other racial groups. When information about other groups is

gained through long-term interactions with co-workers, neighbors, and others, the acquired information is likely to be relatively accurate and largely favorable in content. This positive first-hand information may then be generalized into positive perception of the group(s) as a whole. In the absence of such first-hand information, however, individuals may be unable to counter unfavorable impressions and stereotypes of other racial and cultural groups. In addition, individuals may be influenced by slanted media images of other racial groups, as well as by selected public statements of racial and ethnic group leaders and other indirect (and often inaccurate) sources of information about these groups. (Ellison and Powers 1994, 385–86).

The contact hypothesis is *not* invariably supported by the empirical literature, but ample evidence confirms the view that increasing interracial contact enhances reconciliation, at least under some circumstances (see generally Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2000). The circumstances that seem to make interracial contact especially effective at dispelling prejudice include: (1) equal status—the expectation and perception by parties of equality in the interaction; (2) common goals—sharing a common objective (as in athletics or the military); (3) intergroup cooperation—interactions based around cooperative rather than competitive circumstances; and (4) support from authorities, law, or custom—the presence of authoritative norms encouraging acceptance (see Pettigrew 1998). Jackman and Crane (1986) point to social equality in particular as a crucial attribute of social interactions if salutary effects on racial attitudes are to be realized.

Interracial understanding and trust are often the focus of those who study the influence of contact on racial attitudes. For instance, Ellison and Powers (1994) consider three indicators of the attitudes black Americans hold toward whites: disapproval of interracial dating, skepticism regarding the motivations of whites, and perceptions of improvement in the racial climate in the United States. Sigelman and Welch (1993) analyze perceptions of hostility between racial groups and preferences for close social ties between the two races. Jackman and Crane (1986) employ a multidimensional dependent variable, ranging from “cognitive differentiation between blacks and whites” to “affective differentiation” to “social predispositions toward blacks,” as well as policy attitudes on social issues. Basically, these authors are studying what may readily be understood as “racial reconciliation.” Thus, extant research propounds the hypothesis

²Though these categories were used under apartheid to divide and control the population, these are nonetheless labels South Africans use to refer to themselves (e.g., Gibson and Gouws 2003). I use the term “Coloured” to signify that this is a distinctly South African construction of race and “Asian origin” to refer to South Africans drawn from the Indian Subcontinent.

that racial reconciliation will be more common among those who have greater contact with South Africans of a different race. This hypothesis has rarely if ever been systematically investigated outside the context of Western industrialized societies.

Collective Memory

The “truth” part of “truth and reconciliation” evokes images of “collective memory,” a phenomenon social scientists have long investigated. A collective memory is a socially accepted understanding of the meaning of the past. Understanding a country’s collective memory requires a “focus directly on memories of past events that are shared to a greater or lesser extent by the individuals who constitute a representative sample of a larger population” (Schuman and Corning 2000, 915).

Despite its obvious relevance, little research on collective memories has addressed efforts like the truth and reconciliation process in which an institution tries to create a collective knowledge for a society. But some research is apposite. For instance, Bischooping and Kalmin (1999) analyzed the degree to which Americans participate in a collective memory about the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Perhaps because much of this literature focuses more on memories of specific events than on general understandings of history (see especially Schuman and Corning 2000, who analyze nine discrete events in the history of the Soviet Union), little attention has been given to how people understand the “macrohistory” of their country.

One of the objectives of the truth and reconciliation process is to create a collective memory for South Africa. By establishing a collective memory, it becomes difficult (although not impossible) for people to deny that certain activities took place. As Ignatieff has noted, “All that a truth commission can achieve is to reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in public discourse” (1996, 113). The TRC’s multifaceted truth is not necessarily an officially sanctioned truth, but is instead an amalgamation of ideas about the past with which all South Africans must at least contend.

How one understands history is partly a function of how one has experienced that history. Especially with an all-pervasive system like apartheid—a system in which virtually no aspect of political, social, or economic life was unaffected—the relationship one had with the apartheid past surely influences perceptions and understandings of historical truth. Those who benefited from apartheid

undoubtedly differ in their understandings of that system as compared to those who were victims of the apartheid system.

Summary

Thus, I contend that though there may be other ways to understand “reconciliation,” interracial understanding, respect, and individuation (rejection of stereotypes) are crucial aspects of the concept. The presumption of South Africa’s truth and reconciliation process is that acceptance of the truth—participation in the collective memory unearthed by the truth and reconciliation process—contributes to reconciliation, and that is a central hypothesis of my research. But positive interracial attitudes are often also associated with interracial interactions and contact, so that hypothesis must be considered as well. Finally, I hypothesize that truth acceptance is a function of experiences under apartheid (and other factors as well). All of these are empirical questions and empirical evidence is available to provide some answers.

Research Design

This analysis is based on a survey of the South African mass public conducted in 2000/2001. The sample is representative of the entire South African population (18 years old and older). A total of 3,727 face-to-face interviews were completed. The average interview lasted 84 minutes. The overall response rate for the survey was approximately 87%. Such a high rate of response can be attributed to the general willingness of the South African population to be interviewed, the large number of call-backs we employed, and the use of an incentive for participating in the interview.³ Most of the interviewers were females, and nearly all of the respondents were interviewed by an interviewer of their own race. The sample included representative oversamples of whites, Coloured people, and those of Asian origin.

Interviews were conducted in the respondent’s language of choice. The questionnaire was first prepared in English and then translated into Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, North Sotho, South Sotho, Tswana, and Tsonga.⁴ The

³The incentive was a magnetic torch (flashlight). Singer, Hoewyk, and Maher (1998) show that providing incentives has few negative consequences for survey responses.

⁴Many of the ideas represented in the survey were developed and refined in six focus groups, involving roughly 60 participants, conducted in 2000. For details see Gibson (2004).

methodology of creating a multilingual instrument follows Brislin's (1970) admonitions closely.

Measuring Interracial Respect and Understanding

A basic aspect of reconciliation is surely mutual respect, and a fundamental component of mutual respect is the willingness to judge people as individuals, and not to brand them with group stereotypes. To the extent that South Africans do not respect and understand the various racial groups making up the country, are fearful of them, and subscribe to negative racial stereotypes, reconciliation has not been achieved. Thus, as an empirical matter, it is necessary to consider how ordinary people in South Africa feel about fellow citizens of other racial groups.

We asked our respondents to evaluate several statements about what I will refer to as "the opposite racial group." That is, we asked blacks to judge several propositions about whites, and we asked whites, Coloured people, and those of Asian origin to tell us their views about blacks. In principal, it would be desirable to ask members of each major racial grouping about their attitudes toward all other groups in South Africa. In practice, such a strategy would require dozens of individual questions, so we deemed it not practical.⁵ Consequently, the "opposite" racial group for blacks is whites; for everyone else, the opposite group is black South Africans. (For further discussion of this issue see Appendix B—available from the author.)

I used nine questions about the opposite racial group as indicators of interracial reconciliation. These statements are a mixture of the respondent's feelings about the opposite race, as well as their willingness to accept stereotypes about the groups (see Table 1). Thus, for blacks, the first item asked the respondents to agree or disagree (on a five-point Likert response set) with the statement "I find it difficult to understand the customs and ways of white people."

Attitudes toward racial reconciliation vary considerably depending upon the particular issue. At one extreme, few South Africans (18.2%) believe their country would

⁵Furthermore, during the focus groups we held, it became apparent that the greatest amount of interracial conflict insofar as whites, Coloured people, and those of Asian origin are concerned has to do with relations with the black majority. This is in part due to Affirmative Action, which many of the focus group participants singled out as especially harmful to relations with blacks.

TABLE 1 Racial Reconciliation and Acceptance of the TRC's Truth, by Race, 2001

	Respondent Race			
	African	White	Coloured	Asian Origin
Reconciliation Index				
Mean ^a	-1.78	.88	2.54	1.27
Standard Deviation	4.80	5.41	4.86	4.82
N	2004	988	485	245
Truth Acceptance Index				
Mean ^b	3.64	3.36	3.63	3.58
Standard Deviation	.70	.73	.67	.68
N	2003	988	487	245

^aDifference of means, across race: $F = 138.29$, $p < .000$. $\eta = .32$. High scores indicate more interracial reconciliation.

^bDifference of means, across race: $F = 35.91$, $p < .001$. $\eta = .17$. High scores indicate more acceptance of the truth as promulgated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Note: The Reconciliation Index is based on responses to the following statements:

- I find it difficult to understand the customs and ways of [the opposite racial group].
- It is hard to imagine ever being friends with a [the opposite racial group].
- More than most groups, [the opposite racial group] are likely to engage in crime.
- [The opposite racial group] are untrustworthy.
- [The opposite racial group] are selfish, and only look after the interests of their group.
- I feel uncomfortable when I am around a group of [the opposite racial group].
- I often don't believe what [the opposite racial group] say to me.
- South Africa would be a better place if there were no [the opposite racial group] in the country.
- I could never imagine being part of a political party made up mainly of [the opposite racial group].

The Truth Acceptance Index is based on responses to the following statements:

- Apartheid was a crime against humanity. (True)
- There were certainly some abuses under the old apartheid system, but the ideas behind apartheid were basically good ones. (False)
- The struggle to preserve apartheid was just. (False)
- Both those struggling for and those struggling against the old apartheid system did unforgivable things to people. (True)
- The abuses under apartheid were largely committed by a few evil individuals, not by the state institutions themselves. (False)

be better off were it racially homogeneous. At the other extreme, most find it difficult to understand those of the opposite race (63.6%), and many believe that those of the other race are selfish (61.8%). It is clear from these data that nonreconciled attitudes do *not* dominate in South Africa, although most people have fairly complicated and ambivalent racial views.

This set of items is highly reliable as a measure of inter-racial reconciliation, with the alpha coefficients varying from .79 (those of Asian origin) to .88 (whites). It appears that these various attitudes all represent a single coherent view of those of the “opposite race.”⁶

I have created a “Reconciliation Index” from the responses to these nine items. The index is simply the number of “reconciled responses” minus the number of “nonreconciled” answers. This index has several desirable properties (e.g., it is not related to the number of “don’t know” responses— $r = .02$), and it is sensitive to the fact that many people hold mixed views toward those of the opposite race. Table 1 reports racial differences on this index of reconciliation attitudes.

Only African South Africans hold negative views, on balance, toward the opposite racial group. The mean for our black respondents is -1.78 , which indicates that, on average, blacks gave more unreconciled replies than reconciled answers when asked these questions about whites. In contrast, our Coloured respondents were much more positively oriented toward blacks, with a tendency (on average) to give more reconciled than unreconciled responses. Racial differences on this index are highly statistically significant.

A possible explanation of the finding that whites hold substantially more racially reconciled attitudes than blacks has to do with social desirability—the unwillingness of whites to express openly the negative views they hold of blacks. In the United States, it has become quite difficult to measure racial attitudes among whites due to strong social pressures against explicit expressions of racism (e.g., Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997). Could it be that these South African findings are biased by the tendency of whites to censor their negative attitudes toward blacks? Several logical and empirical tests—reported in Appendix C, available from the author—suggest not. It seems that the racial climate in South Africa is such that it is legitimate to express openly a variety of racial viewpoints, at least in private, to a same-race interviewer.

⁶When the responses to these nine items are factor analyzed, a strongly unidimensional structure emerges among black and white South Africans. Among Coloured people, a second significant factor exists, although the eigenvalue just barely exceeds the 1.00 threshold ($\lambda = 1.05$) and the factor accounts for a trivial amount of the pooled variance (11.7 %, as compared to 48.4 % explained by the first factor). Among Asian South Africans, a second, substantively significant factor emerges ($\lambda = 1.23$), although these two factors are strongly intercorrelated ($r = .5$). In conjunction with the evidence on reliability, I conclude that attitudes toward racial reconciliation are dominated by a single, internally consistent attitude toward those of the opposite race.

Truth and Collective Memory: Core Beliefs about Apartheid

To test the hypothesis that truth is associated with reconciliation I must develop a summary measure of the degree to which each individual accepts the historical truth about apartheid, as promulgated by the TRC. Thus, the respondents were asked to judge five propositions that most analysts would agree constitute the truth about South Africa’s apartheid (see Table 1). These five statements are simple, widely accepted (at least throughout the world, if not in South Africa), and are interrelated, and the veracity (accepting that the statement is either true or false, depending upon the coding scheme reported in the table) of the statements would surely not be controversial among the leaders of the truth and reconciliation process themselves. Most important, these are all truths that the TRC discovered and proclaimed.⁷

The statement declaring apartheid a crime turned out to be widely accepted among South Africans of every race and thus constitutes an important element of a collective South African memory. But despite this apparent condemnation of apartheid, a significant proportion of South Africans of *every race* also believes that the *idea of apartheid* was good, even if the execution of the ideology was not. Most likely, reactions to this statement are in reference to the “separate development” aspects of apartheid, rather than to the idea that a racial hierarchy with racial subjugation is acceptable and/or desirable. Apartheid is sometimes understood as a system of “separate development,” which is compatible with some elements of black nationalism emphasizing the separation of races and the development of blacks apart from whites. Steve Biko’s Black Consciousness Movement, for instance, aimed for the psychological liberation of blacks from feelings of inferiority and the restoration of their human dignity (see Leatt, Kneifel, and Nurnberger 1986, Chapter 7), and rejected interracial integration as an important goal (at least in the short-term). Similarly, the Pan-Africanist Congress has never been interested in building a multiracial South Africa, so it seems quite likely that PAC supporters would favor at least some form of “separate development.” Thus, it is plausible that not all blacks view apartheid as a system of unequivocal evil. In light of these ambivalent attitudes, it is not surprising that a substantial minority of South Africans believes that the struggle to preserve apartheid was just. Again, perhaps this indicates that people accept

⁷See Gibson (2004) for a detailed documentation and justification of this claim. When I refer to the “truth” in every instance I mean the “truth” as promulgated by the TRC.

that each racial community has the right to a separate existence, and, if so, it follows that efforts to preserve separateness are legitimate (Gibson 2004).

South Africans of every race also accept what was probably the most profound conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—that those who struggled for *and* against apartheid committed horrible abuses.⁸ Nonetheless, a plurality of blacks, whites, and those of Asian origin is willing to attribute the abuses to *individuals*, not to the state institutions themselves, a finding consistent with the view of many that apartheid was a good idea poorly implemented.

On the basis of the replies to these items, I calculated an index of truth acceptance which varies from 0—strongly rejecting all statements—to 5—strongly accepting the veracity of each (i.e., the two “true” responses and the three “false” responses). Cross-race differences are significant, but not large (see Table 1). Not surprisingly, blacks are most likely to accept the veracity of these statements; whites are least likely. However, the substantive differences are *not* great—the mean number of “truths” accepted ranges from 2.8 for whites to 3.2 for blacks; the median number of “truths” endorsed among all four racial groups is 3 (data not shown).

Thus, this survey reveals that views about the country’s apartheid past are complicated. In principle, apartheid is *not* perceived as inherently evil by everyone, even if most agree that the implementation of apartheid ideas was criminal. Not surprisingly, whites are more forgiving of the failures of apartheid, but blacks, Coloured people, and South Africans of Asian origin hold unexpectedly tolerant views of apartheid, perhaps due to the revelations of the TRC itself. Generally speaking, the truth and reconciliation process was successful at exposing human rights abuses by all sides in the struggle over apartheid—thereby contributing to the country’s collective memory about its apartheid past.

Is Truth Associated with Reconciliation?

It is quite difficult to test the causal hypothesis linking truth acceptance and reconciliation, since truth may contribute to reconciled attitudes, but reconciled attitudes

may also make it easier to accept the truth about the past. So, while deferring the question of causality to the last portion of this article, I here consider the degree to which acceptance of the truth and reconciled attitudes “go together.” If no such relationship is found, then obviously the two attitudes cannot be causally connected. If connected, then the question of causality arises and must be addressed systematically.

The results of regressing attitudes toward racial reconciliation on acceptance of the TRC’s truth about apartheid are startling. For black South Africans, those who accept more truth are no more or less likely to hold racially reconciled attitudes than those who accept less truth: $\beta = .03$. But among whites, Coloured people, and those of Asian origin the relationships are both statistically and substantively significant ($\beta = .51, .33, .18$, respectively). Indeed, among whites in particular, the relationship is remarkably strong.

The puzzle is Africans: acceptance of the truth has virtually no association with black attitudes toward whites. The contrast between the black and white coefficients is stark indeed ($b = .22$ versus 3.76). The lack of relationship among blacks certainly requires further consideration.

One possibility is that all blacks accept the truth about apartheid, and therefore the variability in reconciliation cannot be attributed to the “constant” truth (since it is axiomatic in statistics that constants cannot account for the variation in variables). This explanation must be rejected, however. As Table 1 (above) clearly shows, the standard deviation of the truth acceptance variable is no smaller among blacks than among the other groups. The variance in the index is sufficient that a statistical relationship could be manifest among blacks were there in fact one.

Another possibility is that the relationship between truth and reconciliation varies across different segments of the black population. In order to consider this hypothesis, I examined the correlation between truth and reconciliation dividing the black respondents by many different factors I hypothesized might affect the truth-reconciliation association.⁹ Generally, the relationship between truth and reconciliation does not vary in meaningful ways (i.e., sensible and monotonic changes in the regression coefficients) when blacks are divided by: gender, age categories, level of education, opinion leadership, literacy, size of place of residence, social class, and interest in politics. With one exception, I found no meaningful distinctions among blacks in the nature of the connection

⁸Desmond Tutu asserted in the Final Report that: “We believe we have provided enough of the truth about our past for there to be a consensus . . . that atrocious things were done on all sides” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 1, Chapter 1, p. 18). Note that *both* the ANC and the National Party objected vigorously to the Final Report when it was released.

⁹Multiple hypotheses are involved here (e.g., “truth” has a greater impact on young people since they did not live through the most repressive period of apartheid), but since none of the hypotheses was supported, I mention them only in passing and without much discussion.

between perceptions of the truth and acceptance of racial reconciliation.

The exception to these null findings is quite revealing, however. I divided the black sample according to the frequency of church attendance, dichotomizing the variable between those attending church at least monthly and those attending less frequently (about 30% of black South Africans). The regression equations for these two groups are:

Infrequent attenders:

$$\text{Reconciliation} = -5.80 + .99 * \text{Truth Acceptance}$$

Frequent attenders:

$$\text{Reconciliation} = -1.16 - .13 * \text{Truth Acceptance}$$

The coefficient for infrequent attenders is highly statistically significant, while the frequent attenders' coefficient is entirely trivial (the respective standardized coefficients are .15 and $-.02$). Thus, among relatively less religious blacks, greater acceptance of the truth contributes to racial reconciliation; among the relatively more religious, the two variables are *unconnected*. This finding is perhaps unanticipated given the religious veneer often associated with the truth and reconciliation process.¹⁰

It may well be that among religious blacks, reconciliation is largely a nonpolitical, other-worldly process and thus is immune to influence by understandings of the facts about the country's apartheid past. Put another way, the *basis* of being reconciled differs between religious and irreligious blacks. Among the former, perhaps reconciliation depends upon the acceptance of certain religious teachings. Among the irreligious, reconciliation may turn on understandings of life on earth, not in the hereafter. Thus, at least with this portion of the black population, truth is indeed connected to reconciliation.

Alternative Explanations of Truth and Reconciliation

I have established to this point that participation in the TRC's truth is related to racial reconciliation, at least for some South Africans. Since causality is such an important issue, and since I have hypothesized alternative explanations of both truth acceptance and racial reconciliation, it is necessary to consider this interrelationship within a broader understanding of the origins of both truth and reconciliation. The principal hypotheses I test include:

¹⁰Note that no differences exist between the two groups in acceptance of the truth about the apartheid past or in racial reconciliation: The correlations are trivial and insignificant.

H₁: Based on the Contact Hypothesis, I expect that more interracial contact is associated with more reconciliation, although not necessarily with greater acceptance of the TRC's truth.

H₂: Experiences under apartheid influence the degree of participation in the TRC's collective memory. Those who benefited from apartheid are expected to be less likely to judge it harshly, but more likely to be reconciled with South Africans of other races.

H₃: If the truth and reconciliation process had anything to do with the attitudes South Africans hold, then knowledge of and confidence in the TRC should contribute to greater endorsement of the Commission's truth. However, the direct effect of these variables on interracial reconciliation should be minimal.

H₄: More generally, those more engaged in public affairs (cognitively mobilized) are expected to be more likely to embrace the TRC's truth, although the effect of most of these variables is likely mediated through knowledge of the activities of the TRC.

H₅: I expect those who speak Afrikaans—the language of apartheid—as their home language to be less accepting of the TRC and less likely to engage in racial reconciliation.

In this analysis, I also control for a variety of demographic attributes of the respondents. Table 2 reports the results of these regressions. (See Appendix A for measurement details.)

The data in Table 2 support a number of revealing conclusions regarding the origins of truth acceptance and racial reconciliation. First, *contact matters*, even with some very strong control variables. For all four racial groups, the coefficients indicate that greater contact is strongly associated with more benevolent racial attitudes.¹¹ Moreover, the effect of contact for most South Africans (except whites) is *not* mediated through attitudes toward the TRC's truth. Only among whites is greater interracial contact also associated with more acceptance of the truth.

¹¹I have explored the effects of different types of contact in a more extended consideration of the contact hypothesis (see Gibson 2004). As it turns out, only contact of a relatively intimate form, based on social equality, has a salutary effect on racial attitudes. Interracial contact in the workplace, for instance, contributes little if anything to racial reconciliation in South Africa.

TABLE 2 Multivariate Determinants of Truth Acceptance and Racial Reconciliation

	Africans							
	Truth Acceptance				Racial Reconciliation			
	b	s.e.	β	r	b	s.e.	β	r
Interracial Contact	.02	.02	.02	.05	1.31	.13	.24***	.28
Net Benefits of Apartheid	−.04	.01	−.14***	−.13	.23	.04	.12***	.13
Knowledge of the TRC	−.04	.02	−.05	−.04	.13	.14	.02	.11
Confidence in the TRC	−.08	.02	−.11***	−.10	−.18	.12	−.04	−.01
Media Consumption	.07	.02	.09**	.08	.11	.13	.02	.14
Interest in Politics	.01	.02	.01	.02	.07	.12	.01	.09
Opinion Leadership	−.04	.06	−.02	.00	.14	.38	.01	.05
Level of Education	.03	.02	.05	.05	−.07	.14	−.01	.16
Illiteracy	.03	.02	.04	−.01	−.67	.15	−.14***	−.21
Afrikaans Language	−.27	.49	−.01	−.02	1.22	3.23	.01	.01
Age	−.00	.00	−.03	−.01	.01	.01	.03	−.07
Social Class	−.00	.02	−.00	.04	.04	.147	.01	−.11
Size of Place of Residence	−.01	.01	−.04	−.04	−.07	.05	−.03	−.13
Gender	−.02	.03	−.01	−.03	.18	.22	.02	−.01
Intercept	3.62	.15			−1.48	.98		
Standard Deviation— Dependent Variable	.71				4.81			
Standard Error of Estimate	.69				4.54			
R ²			.05***				.12***	
N	1958				1958			
	Whites							
	Truth Acceptance				Racial Reconciliation			
	b	s.e.	β	r	b	s.e.	β	r
Interracial Contact	.11	.02	.16***	.27	2.32	.15	.45***	.52
Net Benefits of Apartheid	.00	.01	.01	.05	−.05	.05	−.03	.01
Knowledge of the TRC	.03	.03	.03	.13	.30	.21	.04	.18
Confidence in the TRC	.11	.03	.12***	.20	1.16	.20	.16***	.26
Media Consumption	.06	.03	.07*	.09	.06	.18	.01	.07
Interest in Politics	−.02	.03	−.03	.06	−.16	.19	−.03	.09
Opinion Leadership	.03	.06	.01	.06	−.43	.39	−.03	.04
Level of Education	.07	.02	.10***	.20	.32	.14	.07*	.17
Illiteracy	−.03	.10	−.01	−.06	−1.10	.69	−.04	−.11
Afrikaans Language	−.36	.05	−.25***	−.33	−1.42	.31	−.13***	−.25
Age	−.00	.00	−.04	−.07	.01	.01	.03	−.03
Social Class	−.12	.03	−.11***	−.18	−.17	.22	−.02	−.10
Size of Place of Residence	−.04	.02	−.07*	−.13	.03	.12	.01	−.03
Gender	.08	.04	.06	.03	.57	.30	.05	.02
Intercept	3.19	.19			−3.74	1.30		
Standard Deviation— Dependent Variable	.73				5.42			
Standard Error of Estimate	.65				4.46			
R ²			.22***				.33***	
N	958				958			

(continued on next page)

TABLE 2 Multivariate Determinants of Truth Acceptance and Racial Reconciliation (*continued*)

	Coloured South Africans							
	Truth Acceptance				Racial Reconciliation			
	b	s.e.	β	r	b	s.e.	β	r
Interracial Contact	-.01	.02	-.02	.06	1.40	.16	.38***	.45
Net Benefits of Apartheid	-.04	.01	-.18***	-.23	-.20	.07	-.12**	-.23
Knowledge of the TRC	-.00	.04	-.01	.22	.18	.27	.04	.32
Confidence in the TRC	.01	.04	.01	.12	.40	.26	.08	.24
Media Consumption	.05	.03	.08	.24	.24	.23	.05	.16
Interest in Politics	.08	.04	.12*	.29	.67	.24	.14**	.32
Opinion Leadership	-.19	.09	-.09*	.03	.74	.60	.05	.14
Level of Education	.14	.04	.20***	.32	.18	.26	.04	.22
Illiteracy	.01	.05	.01	-.20	.27	.33	.04	-.13
Afrikaans Language	-.24	.08	-.15**	-.26	-1.88	.56	-.16***	-.21
Age	.00	.00	.02	-.01	-.03	.01	-.09*	-.11
Social Class	.06	.04	.08	-.17	.23	.26	.04	-.15
Size of Place of Residence	-.03	.02	-.07	-.21	-.12	.12	-.05	-.15
Gender	-.19	.06	-.14**	-.19	.93	.40	.10*	-.06
Intercept	3.19	.27			-1.22	1.78		
Standard Deviation— Dependent Variable	.68				4.88			
Standard Error of Estimate	.61				4.08			
R ²			.22***				.32***	
N	457				457			
	South Africans of Asian Origin							
	Truth Acceptance				Racial Reconciliation			
	b	s.e.	β	r	b	s.e.	β	r
Interracial Contact	-.06	.04	-.09	.02	1.82	.28	.40***	.47
Net Benefits of Apartheid	-.05	.01	-.26***	-.31	-.08	.08	-.06	-.09
Knowledge of the TRC	.07	.07	.07	.11	.53	.46	.08	.26
Confidence in the TRC	-.06	.06	-.07	-.05	.35	.35	.06	.13
Media Consumption	.00	.06	.00	.03	.30	.37	.05	.16
Interest in Politics	.04	.05	.05	.14	-.13	.35	-.02	.16
Opinion Leadership	.13	.13	.06	.14	-.99	.84	-.07	.02
Level of Education	.02	.06	.02	.14	1.18	.39	.23**	.30
Illiteracy	.08	.08	.08	-.02	.74	.50	.10	-.12
Afrikaans Language	.45	.26	.11	.14	3.73	1.66	.13*	.15
Age	-.01	.00	-.17*	-.16	-.01	.02	-.02	-.13
Social Class	-.10	.06	-.12	-.18	.14	.35	.03	-.17
Size of Place of Residence	.04	.03	.09	-.02	.30	.19	.09	.01
Gender	-.12	.09	-.09	-.11	-.79	.56	-.08	-.17
Intercept	4.14	.38			-8.64	2.47		
Standard Deviation— Dependent Variable	.69				4.82			
Standard Error of Estimate	.64				4.12			
R ²			.18***				.31***	
N	241				241			

Significance of standardized regression coefficient (β): *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$.

What causal relationship links interracial contact and reconciliation? My preferred hypothesis is that contact causes racial attitudes, but the statistical analysis to this point cannot dismiss the alternative possibility that racial attitudes cause contact. Additional analysis is necessary if a causal claim is to be sustained.

One approach to the question of causality is to assume that personality attributes are relatively obdurate, and therefore are unlikely to change as a result of interracial contact. Formed early in life, personalities thus precede contact in the causal sequence, even if contact is in part a function of such characteristics. If contact is still related to interracial attitudes even controlling for personality attributes, then one is entitled to conclude that contact may in fact contribute to salutary racial views.

Using a measure of *xenophobia* (see Appendix A), which is commonly assumed to be a personality characteristic, I discover that controlling for personality does virtually nothing to diminish the relationship between contact and racial attitudes. For instance, among blacks and whites, respectively, the uncontrolled and controlled coefficients are: .28 versus .27, and .52 versus .49. Thus, these results add considerable weight to the claim that contact shapes racial attitudes.

Moreover, extant research has clearly established that interracial contact contributes to more positive racial attitudes. Pettigrew and Tropp (2000, 94) recently reported a major meta-analysis of the contact literature, based on 203 individual studies with 313 independent samples and 746 separate tests and involving 90,000 subjects from 25 different nations. They conclude: "*Overall, face-to-face interaction between members of distinguishable groups is importantly related to reduced prejudice.*" Of the 203 studies, 94% found an inverse relationship between contact and prejudice" (2000, 109, emphasis in original). They also directly address the problem of the causal sequence, concluding that studies based on longitudinal designs, advanced statistical techniques, and what they term "no-choice studies" (studies in which subjects have little discretion as to whether to engage in contact) reveal that "contact as the cause of reduced prejudice is more important than the selection-bias possibility that prejudiced people avoid contact" (2000, 100). "Bigoted people do avoid contact with the scorned group, but the causal sequence from contact to diminished prejudice is stronger" (2000, 109). Thus, the results I report here are entirely consistent with the findings of extant literature.

Finally, in South Africa, since 1994, it is likely that interracial contact has changed more readily than have racial attitudes, since racial attitudes are generally assumed to evolve relatively slowly. With the fall of apartheid, opportunities for interracial contact increased dramatically. In

addition, South Africans now have less choice in whether or not they will mix with people of other races, since some degree of integration has been mandated in the schools, in housing, in the workplace, and in public places. Further, the quality of such contact has surely increased as blacks have been released from a subservient and subordinate position in South Africa. If racial attitudes change slowly, if interracial contact in South Africa has increased rather substantially, and is to some degree involuntary, then it seems plausible that contact causes racial attitudes.

Table 2 also reveals that experiences under apartheid influence one's willingness to accept the TRC's truth about the past for all except whites. Perhaps net experiences with apartheid have little impact on white attitudes toward blacks because the variable is strongly skewed in the direction of net benefits, rather than net harms. For blacks, those who benefited more from the old system are less likely to endorse the TRC's critique of apartheid, as hypothesized. Relatedly, blacks harmed less by apartheid are more likely to hold favorable attitudes toward whites. The opposite is true for Coloureds: those hurt less are less likely to hold favorable attitudes toward blacks, perhaps because Coloured people are more closely aligned with whites and white interests.

Despite some bivariate correlations, in no instance does knowledge of the TRC per se directly influence either truth or reconciliation, perhaps because knowledge acts as a necessary but not sufficient condition for influence and attitude change, or because opponents of the TRC faced strong incentives to become knowledgeable about what the Commission was doing.¹² Confidence in the TRC does influence truth acceptance, at least among blacks and whites. Interestingly, however, the signs differ between blacks and whites. It is particularly difficult to unravel the causality here, but it seems that, among whites,

¹²The truth and reconciliation process was enormously well publicized in South Africa, over a long period of time. For instance, the SABC aired special reports on the TRC every Sunday from April, 1996 until March of 1998, and the program often scored as among the most popular on South African television. And TV exposure pales in comparison to radio exposure, since radio is the most popular information medium for most South Africans. With such saturation, it seems likely that everyone got the opportunity to judge the TRC's conclusions. The fact that awareness of the TRC does not correlate with truth acceptance simply means that, though the TRC may have changed the views of some, many of those who closely followed the Commission were unpersuaded by its message. Indeed, strong disagreement with the TRC may have motivated some to pay particular attention to the proceedings of the Commission. Conversely, through the two-step flow of information, one might have learned well the messages of the TRC, even without acquiring a high level of information about the TRC. Thus, a high level of awareness is not necessarily connected to one's substantive beliefs about the apartheid past, and this correlation is not incompatible with the view that the TRC caused some South Africans to change their views about matters of racial reconciliation.

confidence in the TRC was a precondition for influence, but among blacks, lack of confidence may actually be spuriously related to beliefs about apartheid and the TRC. In any event, these coefficients are just barely distinguishable from zero, so confidence did little to shape views of the TRC's truth.

None of the other variables has much impact on truth and reconciliation, with one exception. Speaking Afrikaans as one's home language makes whites and Coloured people less likely to accept the truth and less likely to be reconciled with black South Africans. Being immersed in Afrikaans culture, even among Coloured people, seems to have made one resistant to the changes that have come to South Africa, which is perhaps not surprising since the Afrikaans community is the most threatened by the new political dispensation in South Africa (e.g., they no longer profit from Affirmative Action for Afrikaners).

Some of the other findings reported in this table are intriguing, but because many of these results are idiosyncratic to specific racial groups—and because a central purpose of the analysis reported in the table is merely to aid in unraveling the causality between truth and reconciliation—I resist the temptation to give a full accounting of each of the individual, group-specific findings.

The Causal Connection Between Truth and Reconciliation

To establish strong causal inferences linking truth acceptance and reconciliation, a complex, longitudinal (and probably experimental) research design would be necessary. In the absence of such a design, a statistical technique is available that provides at least some purchase on the causal relationship between truth and reconciliation. Two-stage least squares yields estimates of the influence of truth on reconciliation, *and* the effect of reconciliation on truth (on two-stage least squares see Berry 1984).

The first stage in the regression involves the creation of instrumental variables. These variables are created via the regression equations reported in Table 2. Unfortunately, the results in Table 2 indicate that the variance in truth acceptance among Africans is insufficiently well understood to continue with the two-stage least squares. For the other three groups, however, the first-stage equations provide useful instrumental variables for both truth and reconciliation.

For the second-stage regression, my hypotheses identify three types of variables: (1) factors influencing truth

acceptance but not reconciliation (experiences under apartheid, knowledge of and confidence in the TRC, and media consumption, interest in politics, and illiteracy), (2) factors influencing reconciliation but not truth acceptance (interracial contact), and (3) control factors hypothesized to affect both truth acceptance and reconciliation. In the second-stage regression, each endogenous variable is modeled as a function of the instrument representing the other endogenous variable, and *only* the exogenous variables hypothesized to have direct effects on the endogenous variable. The coefficients of greatest interest from this analysis concern the effects of truth on reconciliation, and, estimated independently, the influence of reconciled attitudes on truth acceptance. Table 3 reports the two-stage least squares results for whites, Coloured people, and those of Asian origin. To reiterate, because the first-stage equations do not provide sufficient ability to predict truth acceptance among Africans (this is also true when the regression analysis is restricted to irreligious Africans), they have been excluded from this portion of the analysis.

Truth and Reconciliation Among Coloured South Africans

Among Coloured people, acceptance of the truth and racial reconciliation are related: $r = .33$. But does this mean that acceptance of the truth leads to reconciliation or that those who were already reconciled found the truth acceptable? The second-stage equation yields strong support for the inference that truth acceptance does indeed cause racial reconciliation. The unstandardized coefficient for the equation in which reconciliation causes truth is $-.05$; for the equation in which truth causes reconciliation, the coefficient is $+5.29$. The former coefficient is of course trivial and statistically insignificant; the latter is neither. Clearly, greater appreciation of the truth about apartheid leads to greater racial reconciliation (and not vice versa) among Coloureds. In light of the sophisticated statistical analysis, the inclusion of essential control variables, and the strength of the empirical evidence, the inference that truth causes reconciliation is strongly supported.

Table 3 also reconfirms the strong influence of interracial contact on racial reconciliation: Those who have more (and more significant) interactions with Africans are more likely to hold reconciled attitudes. In addition, Coloured women are significantly more reconciled with Africans than Coloured men.

Among Coloured people, truth acceptance is not related to reconciliation but is instead a function of level of education, experiences under apartheid, whether one

TABLE 3 Two-Stage Least Squares Analysis of Truth Acceptance and Racial Reconciliation

	Whites					
	Truth Acceptance			Racial Reconciliation		
	b	s.e.	β	b	s.e.	β
Truth Acceptance	—			6.11	1.36	.82***
Interracial Contact	—			1.68	.23	.33***
Racial Reconciliation	.05	.01	.36***	—		
Net Benefits of Apartheid	.00	.01	.02	—		
Knowledge of the TRC	.02	.03	.02	—		
Confidence in the TRC	.06	.03	.06*	—		
Media Consumption	.05	.02	.06*	—		
Interest in Politics	-.01	.03	-.02	—		
Illiteracy	.02	.09	.01	—		
Size of Place of Residence	-.04	.02	-.07**	—		
Opinion Leadership	.05	.05	.02	—		
Level of Education	.05	.02	.08**	-.06	.18	-.01
Afrikaans Language	-.29	.05	-.20**	.97	.62	.09
Age	-.00	.00	-.05	.02	.01	.06
Social Class	-.11	.03	-.10**	.49	.29	.06
Gender	.06	.04	.04	.19	.33	.02
Intercept	3.38	.17		-24.53	4.69	
Standard Deviation— Dependent Variable	.73			5.42		
Standard Error of Estimate	.60			4.68		
R ²			.25***			.30***
N	958			958		
	Coloured South Africans					
	Truth Acceptance			Racial Reconciliation		
	b	s.e.	β	b	s.e.	β
Truth Acceptance	—			5.29	1.26	.73***
Interracial Contact	—			1.59	.17	.44***
Racial Reconciliation	-.01	.02	-.05	—		
Net Benefits of Apartheid	-.05	.01	-.19***	—		
Knowledge of the TRC	-.00	.04	.00	—		
Confidence in the TRC	.01	.04	.02	—		
Media Consumption	.05	.03	.08	—		
Interest in Politics	.09	.04	.13*	—		
Illiteracy	.01	.05	.01	—		
Size of Place of Residence	-.03	.02	-.08	—		
Opinion Leadership	-.18	.09	-.09*	—		
Level of Education	.14	.04	.21***	-.42	.35	-.09
Afrikaans Language	-.25	.09	-.15**	-.76	.70	-.06
Age	.00	.00	.02	-.03	.02	-.09*
Social Class	.06	.04	.09	-.11	.28	-.02
Gender	-.18	.06	-.13**	1.70	.52	.17***
Intercept	3.18	.27		-17.20	4.42	
Standard Deviation— Dependent Variable	.68			4.88		
Standard Error of Estimate	.61			4.55		
R ²			.22***			.26***
N	457			457		

(continued on next page)

TABLE 3 Two-Stage Least Squares Analysis of Truth Acceptance and Racial Reconciliation (continued)

	South Africans of Asian Origin					
	Truth Acceptance			Racial Reconciliation		
	b	s.e.	β	b	s.e.	β
Truth Acceptance	—			2.29	1.16	.33*
Interracial Contact	—			2.04	.28	.45***
Racial Reconciliation	-.03	.03	-.22	—		
Net Benefits of Apartheid	-.05	.01	-.27***	—		
Knowledge of the TRC	.08	.08	.09	—		
Confidence in the TRC	-.05	.06	-.05	—		
Media Consumption	-.01	.06	.01	—		
Interest in Politics	.04	.06	.05	—		
Illiteracy	.10	.08	.10	—		
Size of Place of Residence	.05	.03	.11	—		
Opinion Leadership	.10	.14	.05	—		
Afrikaans Language	.57	.30	.14	—		
Level of Education	.05	.07	.07	1.04	.35	.20**
Age	-.01	.00	-.17*	.02	.02	.05
Social Class	-.10	.06	-.12	.48	.38	.09
Gender	-.14	.09	-.10	-.44	.59	-.05
Intercept	3.88	.41		-15.87	5.37	
Standard Deviation—						
Dependent Variable	.69			4.82		
Standard Error of Estimate	.67			4.19		
R ²			.17***			.28***
N	241			241		

Significance of standardized regression coefficient (β): *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$.

is an Afrikaans speaker, and, to a lesser degree, gender and interest in politics. Perhaps the most interesting finding from this analysis has to do with the independent influence of speaking Afrikaans. Coloured people who speak the language of apartheid are less likely to accept the truth than English speakers. And of course the impact of this variable is entirely independent of level of education, knowledge of the TRC, and even the net benefits experienced under apartheid. However, the direct effect of speaking Afrikaans on reconciliation is trivial, since the influence of the variable flows entirely through truth acceptance. Being a Coloured Afrikaans speaker shapes one's understanding of the truth about apartheid, and consequently one's level of reconciliation with the African majority.

South Africans of Asian Origin

Among South Africans of Asian origin, truth and reconciliation are related at $r = .18$ ($p = .004$); truth acceptance is associated with reconciliation. According to the two-stage

least-squares model, truth directly contributes to reconciliation ($b = 2.29$), but reconciliation does not influence truth acceptance ($b = -.03$). Contact with Africans also strongly shapes the racial attitudes of those of Asian origin, just as experiences under apartheid shape their views of the truth about apartheid. But the most important finding is that, among South Africans of Asian origin, those who have come to accept the truth about apartheid tend to be substantially more reconciled.

White South Africans

The analysis for white South Africans is a bit problematic since truth and reconciliation are so strongly correlated with each other ($r = .51$). Under such conditions, two-stage least squares has difficulty partitioning the reciprocal causation into individual components. In fact, that is exactly the conclusion of the analysis: truth does lead to reconciliation ($b = 6.11$), but reconciliation also leads to truth ($b = .05$). Both coefficients are highly statistically significant. Thus, while there is strong evidence that

accepting the TRC's truth leads to reconciliation among whites, it is also true that those who came to accept the TRC's truth were to some degree already reconciled with their African fellow citizens. Perhaps both causal processes have taken place, reinforcing each other.

Similar to Coloured people, the role of being Afrikaans is to directly shape understandings of the past, but not to influence reconciliation directly. Afrikaans speaking whites tend to reject the TRC's truth, and because they do so, they tend to be less reconciled with the African majority.

Interracial contact also strongly influences racial reconciliation among whites. Indeed, none of the other independent variables has any significant direct effect on white racial attitudes. In terms of truth acceptance, only home language and reconciliation attitudes have strong direct influences on levels of participation in the country's collective memory.

Summary

Three conclusions about the causal link between truth and reconciliation emerge from my analysis:

- Among South Africans of Asian origin and Coloured South Africans, accepting the truth about the past seems to have caused people to be more reconciled.
- Among white South Africans, truth leads to reconciliation, but those more reconciled are also more prepared to accept the truth. Thus, truth and reconciliation go together, but the causal relationship appears to be reciprocal. Still, among whites, accepting the truth does indeed contribute to reconciliation.
- Among blacks, truth does not lead to reconciliation; nor does reconciliation lead to truth.

Discussion and Concluding Comments

In this article, I have addressed three issues: (1) Do truth and reconciliation go together (covary), (2) If so, in what direction is the relationship (positive or negative), and (3) Did one cause the other? My analysis has answered the first and second questions with considerable certainty: in no instance is truth associated with *irreconciliation*, and among whites, Coloured South Africans, and those of Asian origin, a substantial positive relationship is revealed in the data. For these three groups, I also adduce evidence that truth may cause reconciliation, although given the constraints of these data, considerably less confidence in this causal inference is warranted. Thus, the

minimalist conclusion of this research is that the truth and reconciliation process has done little to harm race relations in South Africa; the maximalist conclusion is that the truth process has actually caused a salutary change in racial attitudes.

Among black South Africans, truth seems to contribute little to reconciliation. This is perhaps a disappointing finding, although it should be strongly emphasized that truth does not contribute to irreconciliation either. Many feared that the revelations of the TRC would harden black attitudes toward whites, making coexistence in the New South Africa even more difficult. That the truth and reconciliation process seems not to have had a negative influence among Africans, while having positive influences on whites, Coloured people, and those of Asian origin, indicates that the process has clearly been a net benefit to South Africa.

My consideration of alternative hypotheses has also led to some important discoveries, the most significant of which has to do with the role of interracial interactions in contributing to reconciliation. South Africans who interact with those of other races tend to understand and trust them more and to reject racial stereotypes as well. This finding is neither trivial nor tautological—under many conditions, interracial interactions exacerbate racial tensions, rather than calming them. In general, racial isolation seems to make racial reconciliation much more difficult to achieve in South Africa.

My analysis supports a rather variegated view about the nature of reconciliation in contemporary South Africa. From the point-of-view of a society that formally abandoned apartheid less than a decade ago—and a society in which civil war was a very real possibility in the not-too-distant past—the levels of racial reconciliation discovered in this survey are remarkable. Few observers of South African politics would have anticipated the findings reported here.

Still, racial reconciliation among the black majority in South Africa poses some unique challenges. Most obviously, blacks bore the brunt of the repression under the apartheid system created by the whites, so it is not at all surprising that they do not feel particularly charitably toward their white fellow citizens. But several other factors seem to contribute as well to negative racial attitudes among blacks. Perhaps most important is that blacks rarely have any meaningful interaction with whites, making interracial understanding difficult at best. Also significant is the fact that greater education does *not* contribute to greater reconciliation among blacks; nor are young blacks any more likely to be reconciled than older blacks. Perhaps my most hopeful finding is that reconciliation is more likely within the black community as

memories of experiences under apartheid fade, but several of these results are not so encouraging.

Has the truth and reconciliation process contributed to democratization in South Africa? To answer this question in any meaningful way requires more investigation than is possible with these survey data. But this analysis suggests that the truth and reconciliation process has had some positive influences, at least for some South Africans. Consider whites. Among whites, greater attention to and confidence in the TRC is associated with greater acceptance of the truth about apartheid, and consequently with greater racial reconciliation. This process is especially powerful among English-speaking whites. The causality involved in these relationships may be somewhat ambiguous, but these data are strongly compatible with the conclusion that whites learned something from the TRC and that the things they learned made them better able to get along with their black fellow citizens. If so, then this is a very important contribution of the truth and reconciliation process to the consolidation of democratic reform in South Africa.

Appendix A

Measurement of Independent Variables

Interracial Contact: The interracial contact questions were asked with regard to those of the “opposite race” (see Appendix B). The following questions were asked:

Now we would like to ask about the type of contacts you have with [GROUP]. In your work, on a typical working day, how much contact do you have with [GROUP]? A great deal, some, not very much, hardly any contact, or no contact at all?

Outside your work, how much contact do you have with [GROUP]? A great deal, some, not very much, hardly any contact, or no contact at all?

How often have you shared a meal with a [GROUP]? Quite often, not very often, or never? How many [GROUP] people would call “true” friends? Quite a number of [GROUP] people, only a small number of [GROUP] people, hardly any [GROUP] people, or no [GROUP] people?

I created a single summary index of the degree of interracial interactions. Since contact within the workplace plays no role in creating more reconciled racial attitudes, I excluded that variable from the index. So as to insure against unequal weighting of the various components of

the index, I standardized each of the variables to a range from 0 to 4.

Net Benefits of Apartheid: In order to construct a measure of the net benefits of apartheid, both the benefits and harms experienced must be measured. I developed a measure of the degree to which each respondent believes he or she was harmed by apartheid based on the following questions.

Here is a list of things that happened to people under apartheid. Please tell me which, if any, of these experiences you have had. Note: The response set is: (1) Yes, (2) No.

Required to move my residence
Lost my job because of apartheid
Was assaulted by the police
Was imprisoned by the authorities
Was psychologically harmed
Was denied access to education of my choice
Was unable to associate with people of different race and colour
Had to use a pass to move about

Benefits were assessed with the following questions:

Some people have told us that they benefited from the old system of apartheid. What about you—would you say you definitely benefited, probably benefited, probably did not benefit, or definitely did not benefit from

The educational system under apartheid
Cheap labour available under apartheid
Level of crime under apartheid
Access to jobs under apartheid

The most useful measure of apartheid experiences should represent the *relative* costs and benefits of apartheid, not just the levels of perceived costs and perceived benefits. I calculated such a measure by subtracting the number of perceived costs from the number of perceived benefits (after standardizing the costs and benefits indices to a 0 to 8 scale). Those with a score of zero are those whose costs and benefits are equal. Those with scores less than zero are those who were net losers from apartheid; those with scores greater than zero are net winners from apartheid. *Xenophobia:* The measure of xenophobia was derived from the responses to the following items (with the xenophobic response shown in parentheses):

It is usually easy for me to like people who have different values from me. (Disagree)
Listening to opposing viewpoints is usually a waste of time. (Agree)

I generally don't like people who have different ideas from me. (Agree)

I can usually accept other people as they are, even when they are very different from me. (Disagree)

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