

CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Social Surveys Unit

RACE, DISCRIMINATION AND  
DIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Jeremy Seekings

CSSR Working Paper No. 194

May 2007

Jeremy Seekings is Professor of Political Studies and Sociology at the University of Cape Town. He has held visiting appointments at Yale and Oxford universities. His books include *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Johannesburg, 1993), *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-2001* (Cape Town, London and Athens, OH, 2000), and *Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa* (co-authored with Nicoli Nattrass, New Haven and London, 2005, and Pietermaritzburg, 2006). From 2001 to 2006 he edited the journal *Social Dynamics*, and is currently co-editor of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. He is presently conducting research on the politics of welfare state-building in developing countries.

This paper was discussed at a conference on “Legal and Political Remedies to Discrimination”, at the University of California, Los Angeles, February 2007.

# Race, Discrimination and Diversity in South Africa

## Abstract

*The end of apartheid has brought a resurgence of research into racial identities, attitudes and behaviour in South Africa. The legacy of systematic racial ordering and discrimination under apartheid is that South Africa remains deeply racialised, in cultural and social terms, as well as deeply unequal, in terms of the distribution of income and opportunities. South Africans continue to see themselves in the racial categories of the apartheid era, in part because these categories have become the basis for post-apartheid 'redress', in part because they retain cultural meaning in everyday life. South Africans continue to inhabit social worlds that are largely defined by race, and many express negative views of other racial groups. There has been little racial integration in residential areas, although schools provide an important opportunity for inter-racial interaction for middle-class children. Experimental and survey research provide little evidence of racism, however. Few people complain about racial discrimination, although many report everyday experiences that might be understood as discriminatory. Racial discrimination per se seems to be of minor importance in shaping opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa. Far more important are the disadvantages of class, exacerbated by neighbourhood effects: poor schooling, a lack of footholds in the labour market, a lack of financial capital. The relationship between race and class is now very much weaker than in the past. Overall, race remains very important in cultural and social terms, but no longer structures economic advantage and disadvantage. Post-apartheid South Africa is thus the precise opposite of Brazil.*

# Introduction

In a world in which racial labeling and discrimination are regrettably commonplace, the South African system of *apartheid* stood out as an extreme attempt to order a society explicitly and systematically according to racial categories. Many aspects of apartheid were not unique to South Africa. In the aftermath of slavery, colonial (and especially settler) societies in Africa generally practiced racial segregation. In the USA and Brazil, most black people were denied the vote through literacy and other qualifications (until the 1960s in the USA, and as late as the 1980s in Brazil). In much of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the southern states of the USA, white people owned the land whilst landless black people worked for them. Racism and racial discrimination have been almost universal in the twentieth century. The concept of ‘apartheid’ has even been applied to cities in the USA in the late twentieth century. Indeed, *apartheid* – as implemented by the National Party government in power from 1948 to 1994 – was built on the foundations of racialised colonial and settler societies in which a minority of white settlers – farmers and workers – lived amidst an indigenous or ‘native’ majority. What made apartheid unique was its systematic depth and breadth, as the powers of a modern state were deployed to order society along ‘racial’ lines, going far beyond racism and racial discrimination to generalized social engineering around state-sanctioned racial ideology and legislation.

It would be astonishing if post-apartheid South African society was not shaped profoundly by the experience of apartheid, remaining distinctive in terms of the social, political or economic roles played by ‘race’. Despite the rhetorical commitment to non-racialism of the major ‘liberation movement’ (the African National Congress), together with its allies inside the country, during the struggle against apartheid, and despite the abolition of apartheid-era racial legislation and the adoption of a widely lauded constitution, race does indeed remain ever-present in contemporary South Africa. To a large extent this is due to a deep-rooted and enduring consciousness of race in society. To some extent it is due to factors that reflect choices made by post-apartheid political elites: the use of the race card in public life, including in politics, and new policies of racial discrimination involving, especially, affirmative action in employment, with the stated objective of redressing the disadvantages experienced by non-white South Africans (either collectively or individually) under apartheid.

Racial discrimination in economic life against black people has been largely ended in South Africa. Some lingering discrimination by white employers against black people no doubt persists, but it is probably more than offset by the effects of affirmative action. Persistent racial inequalities reflect class stratification rather than racial discrimination, as we have argued at length

elsewhere (Seekings and Natrass, 2005). Income is distributed within the African population almost as unequally as within the population as a whole, as opportunities have expanded rapidly for many African people to move into better-paid occupations at the same time as many others languish in poverty because of poor schooling and chronic unemployment. Yet society remains highly racialised. Inter-racial contact, yet alone marriage, remains very limited.

Telles (2005), in his recent study of Brazil, collates a wide range of data showing how important race is, but in *some* rather than all respects. Contrary to the ideology of ‘racial democracy’, racial discrimination seems significant in economic life. Yet, in terms of identities and social interactions, Brazilians are remarkably non-racial. Telles distinguishes between vertical relationships, in which race is important, and horizontal ones, in which it is not. Post-apartheid South Africa appears to be the opposite of this. The vertical dimension of racism appears to have been largely eliminated (or perhaps even reversed), but the horizontal dimension appears resilient (or perhaps has even increased, as racial differences within the increasingly multi-racial middle class have grown and become more visible). In this paper, I examine the evidence for this.

## **Apartheid and Democracy in South Africa**

The foundation of apartheid was the system of racial categorization enshrined in law by the 1950 Population Registration Act (and subsequent amendments). The Act provided for all South Africans to be classified into one of three basic racial categories:

A white person is one who in appearance is, or who is generally accepted as, a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a Coloured person. A native is a person who is in fact or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa. A Coloured person is a person who is not a white person nor a native.

Later, a fourth category – Indian – was added, for people of South Asian descent, the label ‘native’ was replaced by the labels ‘Bantu’ and ‘Black’.<sup>1</sup> Racial classification was recorded in official identity documentation. From 1970, the ‘black’ category was further sub-divided into ethnic or linguistic groups (such as Zulu and Xhosa) (Christopher, 2002).

---

<sup>1</sup> The four-category schema had been used in the censuses of 1921, 1936 and 1946.

This racial categorisation was largely ‘common-sensical’ and consensual, based on agreed and broadly co-terminous factors (descent, language or culture, and appearance). In difficult or contested cases, classification was *not* based on either descent or purely biological markers. Instead, the cultural markers of ‘appearance’ and ‘general acceptance’ were most important. Whilst informal ‘rules’ about appearance – including about skin colour or hair – were used, they were used inconsistently, and appearance was generally interpreted in terms of social standing or class. Overall, judgements about social standing (friends, work, name, dress, deportment, tastes) were most important in contested cases. The 1951 national Population Census provided the first opportunity for mass racial classification. Race was determined by census enumerators, who had no specific expertise and received no special training. In ambiguous cases, therefore, classification reflected the prevailing social prejudices of white people. People could appeal to a Race Classification Appeal Board. Although the Appeal Board tended to find in favour of the applicant, there were very few appeals, reflecting the generally consensual basis of classification (Posel, 2001a, 2001b).

Ambiguous and contested cases generally involved the very small minority of ‘coloured’ people. ‘Coloured’ was a composite and diverse category including the descendents of relationships between white and black people, the descendents of ‘Malay’ slaves brought from South-east Asia (categorised separately in 1951 but not thereafter), and (after 1970) descendents of the indigenous Khoi and San who inhabited the Western Cape prior to the arrival of either white or black people and did not speak Bantu languages. Whilst segregation between white and black preceded apartheid, introducing segregation between white and coloured was a primary objective of the apartheid state.

Systematic racial classification was required because the apartheid project entailed three broad objectives. The first was *ideological*: to maintain *racial purity* by preventing the ‘mixing’ or ‘dilution’ of ‘white blood’. There should be no inter-racial sex, and hence no inter-racial marriage. To prevent temptation, there should be residential segregation by race. Pre-1948 legislation prohibiting sex and marriage between white and black people was extended to cover white and coloured people. The 1950 Group Areas Act led to the forced removal of almost one million people, mostly coloured people removed from mixed residential areas when they were declared ‘white’ areas. In hospitals, patients were supposed to be handled by nurses of the appropriate racial group (although almost all doctors were white). Segregation was extended to other areas of social interaction: education (with separate schools and universities for each racial group), transport (separate railway carriages), and most municipal facilities such as parks and beaches. Where complete segregation was not

possible, partial segregation was implemented through providing separate entrances and counters (at stations and post offices, for example).

The second objective was to ensure and then protect the *privileged economic position* of the white minority. The apartheid state inherited policies that reserved land for white ownership and better-paid occupations for white people (through the 'colour bar'). Under apartheid, these were enforced more emphatically, but the emphasis shifted to racial discrimination in public education. White children from poorer white families were provided with the skills required to sustain a privileged position in the labour market. The massive investment in the education of white children was so successful that the colour bar became largely redundant. At the same time as protecting wages, the apartheid state sought to protect the profits earned by white-owned capitalist enterprises (including, especially, farmers). Whilst the cost of 'white' or skilled labour was inflated under apartheid, the cost of 'black' or unskilled labour was depressed. 'Influx control' policies and the pass laws restricted where black people were allowed to live and hence work, ensuring not only that urbanization among black people was curtailed (in stark contrast to most other parts of the developing world at the same time), but also that white farmers were guaranteed a supply of labour despite being unable to pay competitive wages.

The third objective of apartheid was to maintain the *political dominance* of the white minority. In the 1950s, the apartheid state was preoccupied with removing coloured voters from the existing common voters roll, but thereafter the primary concern was the political threat posed by the already disenfranchised 'native' or black majority, i.e. the 'swart gevaar' (or 'black danger', in Afrikaans). The apartheid state sought to restrict the political rights of black people to the native reserves, or 'bantustans' or 'homelands' as they were later renamed. Powers were devolved first to appointed chiefs, and later to semi-elected but largely compliant bantustan governments. In 1975, the Transkei homeland was the first to become notionally 'independent', with its citizens losing South African citizenship.

Apartheid not only ordered but also transformed South African society. Discriminatory education and privileged family backgrounds provided white children with the advantages of class, such that explicit racial discrimination in the labour market became unnecessary. Economic and industrial policies designed to reduce dependence on black workers and boost incomes for (white) skilled workers and professionals resulted in capital-intensive growth at the same time as rising unemployment (among unskilled black people), and thus both inequality and poverty. Forced removals of the unemployed and their dependents (i.e. the 'surplus population') from white-owned farms and towns to

the reserves resulted in massive over-crowding and the consequent destruction of a smallholding agrarian society in those areas.

But apartheid was unable to transform the country's demographics. The white minority was too small to sustain economic growth: employers demanded semi-skilled and then skilled black workers to produce goods and a larger pool of consumers to buy them. From the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, the apartheid state began to dismantle racial discrimination in the labour market, to invest more heavily in secondary schooling for black children, and to lift restrictions on the growth of an urban black middle class and a stable, urban working-class. 'Petty apartheid' – i.e. the segregation of parks and other public facilities – was dismantled. Racial discrimination in public welfare was slowly reduced. In 1984, the apartheid state reversed its earlier policies and sought to co-opt the small coloured and Indian minorities into an anti-black coalition, through racially segregated representation in a Tricameral Parliament (with separate chambers for white, coloured and Indian Members of Parliament). Finally, in the face of country-wide revolt from below and intensified international pressures, the apartheid state began to negotiate an end to all aspects of apartheid. In 1994, South Africans – including in the notionally independent homelands – voted in the country's first non-racial elections.

Much of the apartheid-era racial legislation was abolished during the transitional period, i.e. prior to 1994, and the post-apartheid government led by the ANC completed the process. Despite the abolition of the Population Registration Act, however, a battery of new legislation has been introduced providing for racial discrimination in favour of non-white, and especially African, people. The 1998 Employment Equity Act and 2003 Black Empowerment Act have the effect of requiring private employers to transfer equity to new owners and to appoint new employees on the basis of race, privileging the members of 'designated groups', especially African people. The criteria for racial group classification are not defined, and employers (as well as educational institutions that discriminate by race in student admissions) seem to shift uneasily between allowing people to self-classify and threatening that 'false' self-classification is a disciplinary offence!<sup>2</sup> The ideological, political and economic objectives of post-apartheid policies of racial discrimination remain opaque: the effect is to accelerate very rapidly the growth of an African elite and middle-class, but it is unclear what is the relative importance of a concern to stabilize capitalist democracy, Africanist ideology, social justice and the redress of previous disadvantage, and straightforward greed and self-interest on the part of the new political elite.

---

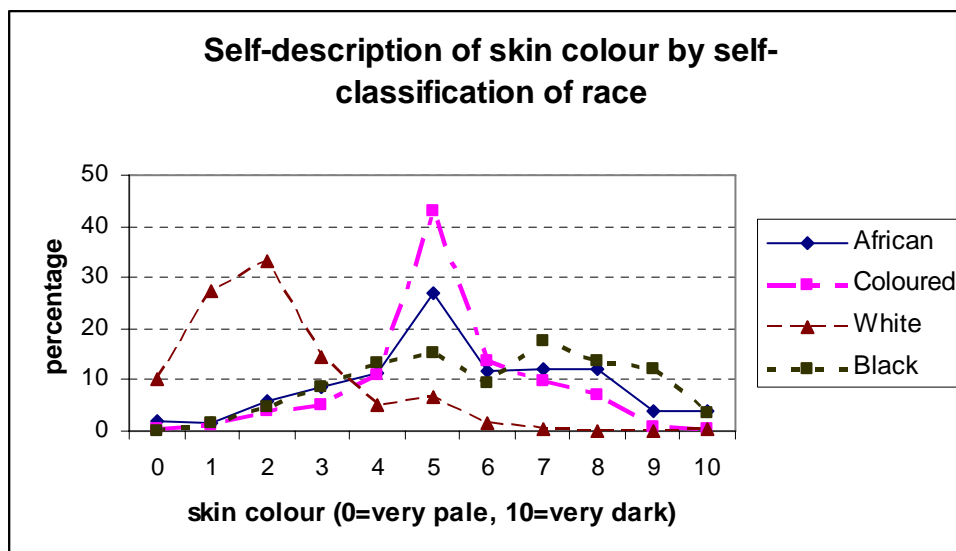
<sup>2</sup> This is an important topic for further research. Cases of ambiguous classification are likely to be more common among the current and aspirant middle classes than among the population as a whole. It is said that members of the Constitutional Court worry that racial classification would be contested and they would have to formulate an explicit approach to the matter.



# Race and Identity after Apartheid

Post-apartheid South Africa is characterized by the dual legacies of apartheid: cultural diversity and economic inequality that both have racial characteristics. Apartheid entrenched racialised identities and fostered racial division at the same time as exacerbating inequality in the distribution of income. The post-apartheid state faces the challenge of tackling these legacies of racialised social engineering.

South Africans tend to see their society in racialised terms. Asked about racial identities, only a tiny proportion of South Africans aver the apartheid-era categories of 'African' (replacing, in official use, the former label 'black'), white, coloured and Indian. How people categorise themselves also accords closely with how (they say) other people see them.<sup>3</sup> In other words, there remains a close correlation between official apartheid-era racial classifications, post-apartheid self-classification and post-apartheid classification by other people. This does not mean, however, that these are the only identities that South Africans have. Asked who they are, South Africans will often say they are South Africa, and that they are proud of this (see Grossberg *et al.*, 2006). Increasingly, they are likely to employ class identities (working class, middle class, poor). And many also use non-racial cultural identities, including religious ones (Christian, Muslim) or ethnic ones (Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans).



Note: 'African' and 'black' were categories chosen by people who were or would have been classified as black under apartheid; they are reported separately here because it is possible that self-assessed skin colour correlates with the choice between 'African' and 'black'. Source: 2005 Cape Area Study.

*Figure 1: Self-assessed skin colour by self-reported race, Cape Town, 2005*

<sup>3</sup> This and the next paragraph are based on the findings of the 2005 Cape Area Study, conducted in Cape Town (see Seekings *et al.*, 2005).

Racial categories themselves mean different things to different people. Asked for reasons for their racial self-classification, white South Africans typically refer to their physical appearance or descent. African and coloured South Africans do not refer to physical appearance or descent, but instead emphasise 'culture' (and, in the case of coloured people, the categorization of the apartheid period). There is little difference in the distribution of self-assessed skin colour among African and coloured people, but white people see their skin colour as distinctly paler (see Figure 1). (Interviewers were also asked to assess the respondents' skin colour, and their assessments accorded closely with the respondents' self-assessments). Whilst almost all South Africans use racial categorization in everyday life, it seems to be white South Africans who hold onto biological conceptions of race.

This is in part because white South Africans – like white people in many other contexts – take their culture for granted. Culturally, whiteness is invisible to most white people (Steyn, 2001). African people are much more conscious of their cultural distinctiveness. Speaking different languages at home, often attending different churches, and perhaps above all retaining distinctive beliefs about, for example, ancestors, witchcraft (see Ashforth, 2005) and family (Russell, 2003). The end of apartheid has also been accompanied by a resurgence of coloured identity. Under apartheid, coloured identity was defined by the intermediate status of coloured people in the racial hierarchy: aspirations to assimilation into white society and fears of relegation to the status of African people combined with widespread feelings of shame as well as marginality. After apartheid, a racialised conception of 'colouredness' has grown stronger, with renewed affinities to whiteness and deepened racism towards African people (Adhikari, 2006).

In recognition of cultural diversity, post-apartheid nation-building in South Africa employed the discourse of the multi-cultural 'rainbow nation' rather than building a common non-racial South African national identity. The national anthem thus combines elements of both the hymn associated with the liberation movements and the apartheid-era anthem, and is sung in four major languages. Official multi-culturalism serves, however, to reproduce the culturally-based racial identities of the past.

In 1998, the then deputy-president Thabo Mbeki emphasized racial inequality in a controversial speech in which he described South Africa as comprising 'two nations, the one black and the other white'.

One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographical dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for the persistence

of gender discrimination against women, all members of this national have the possibility of exercising their right to equal opportunity, and the development opportunities to which the Constitution of 1993 committed our country. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst-affected being women in rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility of exercising what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, that right being equal within the black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realization. (*Hansard*, 29 May 1998, col. 3378)

Mbeki here was drawing on a tradition of referring to ‘two nations’ that originated in mid-nineteenth century, class-divided Britain (in the writings of Benjamin Disraeli) and was popularized in still race-divided USA in the late twentieth century.

For Mbeki, the project of ‘nation-building’ in South Africa entailed bridging the divides between the racially-defined ‘nations’ above. ‘Nation building is the construction of the reality and the sense of common nationhood which would result from the abolition of disparities in the quality of life among South Africans based on the racial, gender and geographic inequalities we all inherited from the past’, he said in 1998 (quoted in Roefs, 2006: 77). Note that there is no mention here of class inequalities. The implication is that the ‘national question’ – defined in racial terms – has precedence above the ‘social question’ of class-based inequalities. Programmes of race-based affirmative action are to have precedence over pro-poor or inter-class redistribution.

On average, white South Africans remain privileged after apartheid, and most African people remain poor. But data on the average person within racial categories ignores the rapid increase in inequality within those categories, especially within the African population. The rapid growth of the African elite and middle class, at the same time as unemployment locks many other African people into chronic poverty, has resulted in incomes (and opportunities) within the African population being distributed nearly as unequally as in South Africa as a whole, and this inequality is as extreme as anywhere in the world. It would be more appropriate to view South Africa in terms of three ‘nations’: the almost entirely African poor, the mostly African working classes, and the multi-racial middle-classes and elites (see Seekings and Nattrass, 2005).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The two nations description is especially inappropriate in the Western Cape and Cape Town, where the demographics of race and class are distinct.

The growth of the African middle class has been the result primarily of the deracialisation of education and of the labour market, and secondly of discriminatory post-apartheid policies of affirmative action. The public service implemented affirmative action rapidly after 1994. The 1998 Employment Equity Act required mid-sized and large private employers to set targets for the transformation of their workforce and to report on their progress in achieving these targets. The growth of an African elite has been the result primarily of discriminatory policies of 'black economic empowerment' in business. The 2003 Black Economic Empowerment Act set in motion a massive redistribution of corporate ownership from the old white elite to the emerging black elite. The African middle class and elite are the agents of a reinvention of African culture: 'African' names and dress are adopted, and supposedly traditional rituals are practiced with new-found fervour.

'Post-apartheid' South Africa is thus characterized by a paradoxical combination of features. Race is no longer coterminous with class, with opportunities for upward mobility opening rapidly for some African people whilst opportunities remain limited for many others. Class is increasingly important. Racism has almost certainly declined. Yet race retains its central position in identities and culture, and political parties can and do continue to play the race card. The priority attached to the rhetoric and policies of affirmative action suggests that the national question takes precedence over the social question, but at the same time African elites rhetorically recommit themselves to non-racialism and a concern for the poor.

Maré has wondered how far the 'ordinariness' of racial consciousness (or 'race-thinking') in post-apartheid South Africa is the consequence of post-apartheid policies of racial categorization.

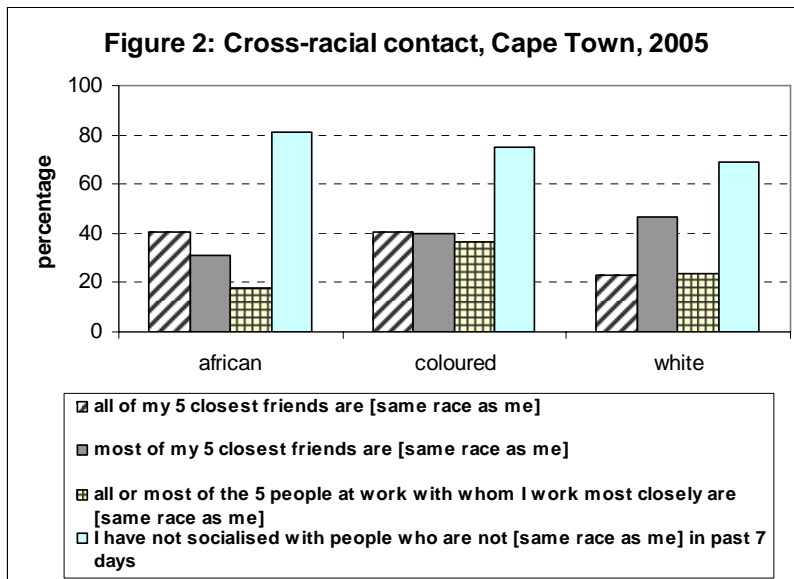
To meet with the requirements of the Employment Equity Act, to gain admission to universities, to claim travel allowances, to play in sports teams, to provide information for tax purposes, to ask the National Research Foundation for funding, to register births and so on, each requires a statement of race belonging. ... There is no opportunity in these forms to avoid the issue. At every level there is an official, from the government minister responsible to the company personnel officer or employment equity manager, to monitor adherence or compliance or progress. No provision is made for alternatives to the basic 'four races' of apartheid South Africa, or to reject such classification. Leaving the space blank, which remarkably few seem to do, means that someone else is required to complete it to balance the books. (Maré, 2001: 82)

Even if the state was to abandon any such administrative categorization, it is hard to imagine that South Africans' acute consciousness of race would vanish. South Africans' racialised identities and perceptions of others have strong roots in civil society. 'Race-thinking' persists uneasily alongside a strong commitment to transcending the racial divisions of apartheid. It is the deep-rootedness of race-thinking (among African as much as if not more than white people) that makes debates over, especially, affirmative action, so complex and invidious.

## **Racism and 'Race Relations'**

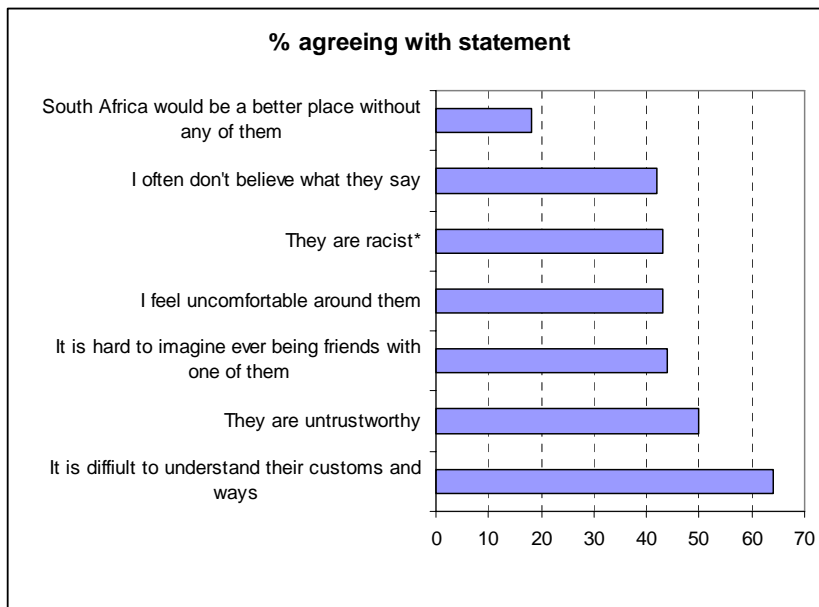
South African 'race relations' was a prominent topic for research until the mid-1960s (MacCrone, 1949; Kuper *et al.*, 1958; Crijns, 1959; van der Berghe, 1967), but thereafter social scientists largely neglected race in favour of Marxian studies of class formation and conflict. Psychologists continued to use social distance scales in studies, mostly conducted among samples of university students (see surveys in Foster and Louw-Potgieter, 1991), whilst a trickle of studies began to explore the effects of inter-racial contact on attitudes in the later apartheid period (Preston-Whyte, 1976; Foster and Finchilescu, 1986).

Since the end of apartheid, research has diversified in a range of new directions, despite the fact that most people continue to live in residential areas that are, in practice, racially segregated, and most children continue to attend schools with children of the same 'race'. Indeed, one of the most striking findings of post-apartheid survey research is how few South Africans enjoy much inter-racial contact. In a survey conducted in 2000-01 by James Gibson (see Gibson, 2004), white, coloured and Indian respondents were asked a series of questions about African people, and African people the same questions about white people. Only 16 percent of the respondents, weighted appropriately, reported having 'a great deal' of contact at work with members of the designated group, whilst only 6 percent reported having 'a great deal' of such contact outside work. Another 13 percent reported having 'some' such contact at work and another 13 percent reported having some such contact outside of work. Eight percent said they ate meals 'quite often' with members of the designated group. A tiny 4 percent said they had 'quite a number' of friends in the designated group, with another 20 percent saying they had 'only a small number' of such friends. Overall, one in three South Africans reported any of the above; two out of three South Africans said that they had little or no contact with members of the designated group.



Subsequent research in Cape Town – which has distinctive demographics, with African and white minorities alongside a coloured near-majority – found what appear initially to be rather higher levels of cross-racial contact (see Figure 2). Only 40 percent of African and coloured respondents said that all of their five closest friends were from the same racial group as them, and only about 20 percent of white respondents said the same. For sure, large majorities of respondents in all three racial groups said that all or most of their closest friends were from the same racial group, but the data suggest that, in Cape Town at least, only a minority of the adult population moves in entirely mono-racial social circles. Even smaller proportions of working people say that they work in mono-racial working environments. But only a minority said that they had actually socialized with people from other racial groups in the past seven days (see the fourth column in each set of columns in Figure 2).

The apparently higher level of inter-racial contact in Cape Town probably reflects two factors. The first is methodological: the survey (the 2005 Cape Area Study) did not ask white and coloured respondents about their interaction with African people specifically, nor did it ask African people about their interaction with white people specifically. It is likely that much ‘cross-racial’ contact is between with white and coloured people, or between African and coloured people, neither of which would have shown up in Gibson’s earlier study. Secondly, it is likely that there are higher levels of cross-racial contact in urban than in rural areas. There are certainly many more opportunities for such contact in urban areas.



Note: responses to the racism question are actually *disagreements* with the statement 'most ... are *not* racist'. Source: 2000-01 Truth and Reconciliation data-set; my own calculations.

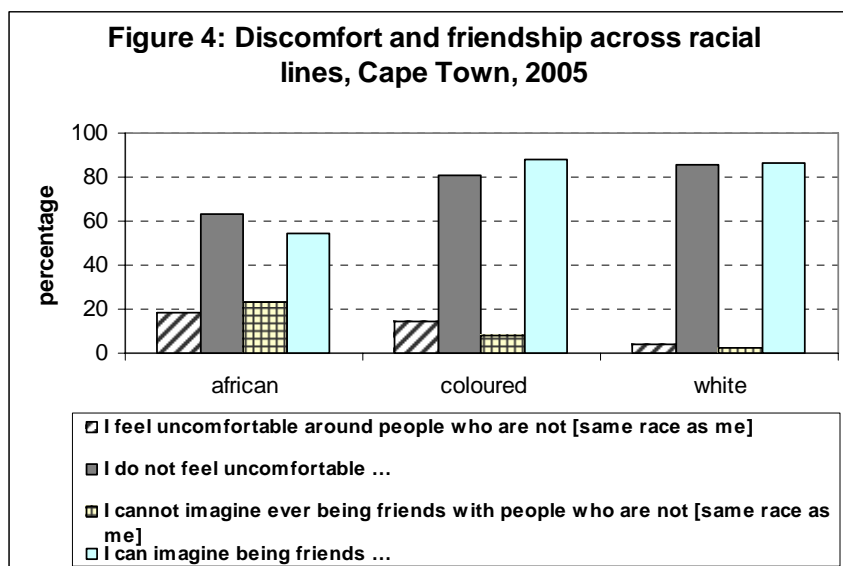
*Figure 3. The limits to social deracialisation, 2000-01.*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the general lack of contact, Gibson found evidence of inter-racial suspicion and distrust on the part of non-African respondents towards African people and among African respondents to white people. The bars in Figure 3 show the proportion of the weighted sample who agreed (or agreed strongly) with each of seven statements about the designated group. Almost one in five South Africans agreed that South Africa would be a better place without the designated racial group. Almost half agreed that they do not believe what members of the designated racial group said, that they feel uncomfortable around them, and that they find it hard to imagine ever being friends with one of them. Almost two out of three South Africans agreed that it is difficult to understand the customs and ways of the designated group. Without exception, larger proportions of African respondents agreed with these statements about white people than did white, coloured or Indian respondents when asked about African people (see Gibson, 2004: 123-4). The 2003 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) similarly found that large minorities of every racial group agreed that most members of their own racial group were racist, whilst a large majority of African people thought that most white people were racist and large majorities of white and coloured people thought that most African people were racist (Roefs, 2006: 89-90).

Gibson shows that there is an inverse correlation between most forms of inter-racial contact and racial *distrust*: the more contact that respondents report with members of the designated group, the less likely they are to agree with statements indicating prejudice or wariness. The exception to this is contact at

work, which has no significant effect on inter-racial attitudes. Gibson shows that contact is especially important to white, coloured and Indian respondents (*ibid*: 139-42).

Limited social deracialisation does not mean that there has been no perceived improvement in race relations. A series of surveys have found that South Africans believe that race relations have improved since the end of apartheid. According to Gibson’s 2001 survey, 16 percent said that race relations had improved a great deal, and a further 45 percent said that race relations had improved somewhat. In 2003, a survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, the *Washington Post* and Harvard found that as many as 68 percent of South Africans believed that race relations were better than they had been under apartheid, and as many expected that race relations would continue to improve over the next five years (Hamel *et al.*, 2004). The 2003 SASAS also found that most African, coloured and Indian people (but less than half of white people) said that race relations had improved since 1994 (Roefs, 2006: 90-1). But the same surveys found evidence that *improved* race relations did not mean *good* race relations. Race relations remains a pressing problem for 49 percent of Gibson’s respondents and a further 33 percent described them as important.



The 2005 Cape Town survey also probed extensively the range of respondents’ contacts and attitudes across racial lines. Figure 4 summarises the proportions of respondents agreeing and disagreeing with the statements “I feel uncomfortable around people who are not [same race as respondent]” and “I cannot imagine ever being friends with people who are not [same race as respondent]”. Very small proportions of respondents who white and coloured respondents and only a small proportion of African respondents agreed with either statement. (Again, the Cape Town survey suggests lower levels of



discomfort than Gibson’s national survey, probably for the reasons discussed above).

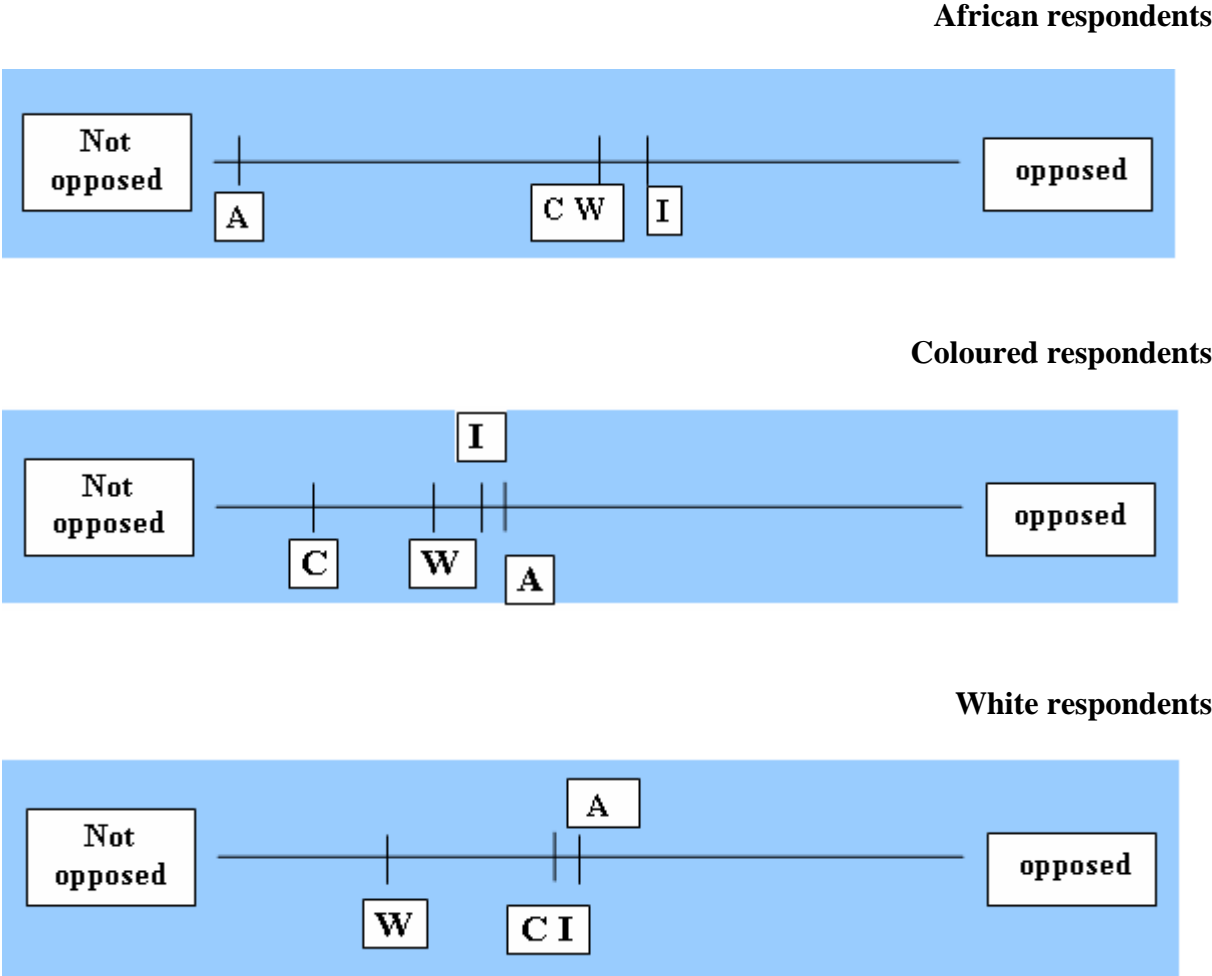


Figure 5: Attitude toward a family member marrying someone, according to race of respondent and of the prospective spouse

The Cape Town survey asked more testing questions about attitudes towards cross-racial marriage. All respondents were positive about marriages to members of their own racial group and relatively hostile to inter-racial marriage, but they did not discriminate significantly according to the precise inter-racial combination (see Figure 5). Thus African respondents were more-or-less indifferent between kin marrying white and kin marrying coloured people (C), coloured respondents were more-or-less indifferent between white (W) and African (A), and white respondents were more-or-less indifferent between coloured, Indian (I) and African.<sup>5</sup> (Further detail is provided in the Appendix).

<sup>5</sup> It is curious that there is not more research on inter-racial relationships in post-apartheid South Africa. There would be value in both accurate quantitative research and qualitative research – including into the cultural milieu of inter-‘racial’ households.

Without longitudinal data, it is hard to assess just how much attitudes have changed over time. Largely anecdotal evidence suggests that explicit and overt racism has declined. But it seems likely that a consciousness of racial difference has been resilient. If so, this is surely linked to the limited extent of residential desegregation or of racial integration in other spheres of life.

## **Inter-Racial Integration and Interaction**

Patterns of residential segregation have not broken down to any great extent since the transition to democracy. Analysing data from successive population censuses, Christopher (2001) shows that South African towns and cities began to desegregate, racially, in the 1990s. White segregation levels (as measured by a standard segregation index) peaked in Cape Town in the 1991 census (and in South Africa's other major cities in either the 1985 or 1991 censuses). Segregation levels for all racial groups declined between the 1991 and 1996 censuses. But the pace of desegregation was very slow indeed. Christopher (2005) updates his analysis using 2001 census data. Slow desegregation continues, but 'the vast majority of the urban population continues to live in highly segregated suburbs' (2005: 267).

Indeed, most new housing areas established after the end of apartheid are as segregated as the older neighbourhoods established (or remade) under the apartheid Group Areas Act. 'Choices' about where to live are, of course, severely limited by economic inequalities. Prices of housing and of land make it almost impossible for low-income African households to move into middle class suburbs. In the absence of detailed studies about 'residential choice', however, it remains unclear how important are social networks (i.e. in what other areas do households that might move have connections or friends) or social preferences (i.e. to what extent do people prefer to live in neighbourhoods with other people sharing a similar culture, that is to some extent coterminous with former racial classifications). The fact that people were forced to move under apartheid does not mean that now, after apartheid, people might be making choices that reflect the tragic cultural legacy of apartheid itself.

Although most South Africans continue to live in mono-racial neighbourhoods, there is a fast-growing literature on the atypical neighbourhoods where there is a degree of racial integration. Residential desegregation a variety of forms, which can be divided into two broad categories: Existing neighbourhoods can become more 'integrated' or integration can occur through the construction of new, more integrated neighbourhoods. Each of these categories can be divided into sub-categories (see Table 1).

<b>Category of integration</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Studies</b>	
Integration in existing neighbourhoods	1. Institutional residences (e.g. university residences, police barracks)	Many	None
	2. Apartment blocks	Hillbrow	Morris (1999)
	3. Private housing, through movement of higher-income African people into formerly coloured/white areas, or of coloured people into formerly white areas	Ruyterwacht, Muizenberg	Teppo (2004), Lemanski (2006c)
	4. Private housing through the movement of downwardly-mobile white people into formerly coloured/African areas, or of coloured people into formerly African areas		None (probably because negligible).
Integration in new neighbourhoods	5. State-driven low-income housing projects in high-income areas	Hout Bay, Noordhoek, Muizenberg, Milnerton	Saff (1998), Dixon <i>et al.</i> (1994)
	6. Planned 'integration' in new state-financed and state-allocated housing projects	Delft South, Westlake	Oldfield (2004), Lemanski (2006b)
	7. Voluntary 'integration' in new private housing areas	Summer Greens	Broadbridge (2001)

All of South Africa's major cities have central areas of apartment blocks which were formerly reserved for white occupation but into which there has been very substantial in-migration. The classic study of such an area is Morris' account of Hillbrow, in Johannesburg, which began to desegregate as early as the late 1970s (Morris, 1999; see also Crankshaw and White, 1995). In Hillbrow, black in-migration prompted white flight, so that racial integration was temporary only. Such cases presumably harden rather than dissipate racial animosity or ambivalence.

Variant 5 also fosters relatively little actual integration. Cases of low-income housing developments in middle-class suburbs, where land prices are high, attract considerable publicity and controversy. In Cape Town, there are just four small areas of this sort (Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay, Masiphumelele in Noordhoek, Westlake near Muizenberg, and Marconi Beam in Milnerton). In each case, the low-income settlements grow far faster than expected and there are chronic problems in providing minimal services and infrastructure (yet alone upgrading the area). Residents of neighbouring low-income and middle-class areas rarely share transport (the former use public transport, the latter private) or even shops (with different supermarkets catering for different groups of consumers), and almost never interact socially. But it is impossible to assess whether negative responses from the existing, white middle-class population are

due to their race or class (for different interpretations, see Saff, 1998; Dixon *et al.*, 1994).

This leaves variants 3, 6 and 7, i.e. desegregation in old or new neighbourhoods. There are two case-studies of variant 3 from Cape Town, of a formerly poor white area (Ruyterwacht) and of a mixed-income, formerly white area (Muizenberg). In Ruyterwacht – which was the site of racialised and possibly racist protests in the early 1990s (Jung and Seekings, 1997) – low housing prices made it attractive for upwardly-mobile coloured households. The non-white population rose from almost zero in the 1980s to 23 percent by 1996 and an estimated 40 percent by 2000. Most of the new residents were young, coloured families, with small children. They were better educated and had higher incomes than most of the existing white residents, and their houses were noticeable for their newly-built garages, second stories, swimming pools and satellite dishes. Many of the new residents are Muslim, which might be expected to add another element of discord in a neighbourhood that was hitherto exclusively Christian. But a typical comment from their white neighbours was that ‘here, our coloureds are good’ – expressing both an engagement with post-apartheid realities and an inability to discard entirely the racial discourses of the past. Faced with two incidents of rape, white and coloured neighbours joined in a neighbourhood watch. In Teppo’s account, ‘hierarchist’ white residents and their new coloured neighbours ‘mbrace one another across racial lines, perhaps reluctantly at times, but knowing full well it is the only choice for both groups if they wish to keep their suburb secure’ (Teppo, 2004: 231).

Muizenberg, on the False Bay coast, shows equally dramatic transformation (Lemanski, 2006c). Between the 1996 and 2001 censuses, the white share of the population fell from three-quarters to only just over one-third. Muizenberg had become an extraordinarily mixed area, with very similar proportions of white, coloured and African (including immigrant African) residents – although racial desegregation has been concentrated in the less expensive sections. In Muizenberg, racial desegregation did not lead to social interaction and integration. Most white children attend non-local schools further down the Peninsula, use their cars to shop outside the area, and tend to socialise elsewhere. The long-standing, richer, white residents view local facilities as deteriorating as a result of racial *and class* desegregation. Churches provide rare sites for racial interaction, although cross-racial membership need not mean that there is much inter-racial interaction.

Summer Greens is an example in Cape Town of variant 7, i.e. a new, middle-class residential area into which have moved people from different racial groups. Summer Greens is home to a lower middle class that combines both upwardly mobile African and coloured families, and downwardly mobile white ones

(Broadbridge, 2001). By 2000, about one half of the suburb's residents were coloured, one-third white, and the rest African. The developers encouraged a 'village atmosphere' and sense of community: residents were not allowed to build high walls (instead, the entire suburb is walled), and the streets were designed to be public spaces rather than just transport routes. Residents, especially those who moved here from coloured or African areas, were very positive about security, but few had close contact with their neighbours. White residents complained about 'low class behaviour' by people who 'aren't very sophisticated, you know', as well as of cultural differences. One white man did not want his children to play with African children, because of the risk of AIDS. There were few facilities in the suburb that could facilitate inter-racial interaction. The most positive interpretation is that racial integration is a slow progress, especially in middle-class suburbs where people emphasise their own privacy and have limited interaction with any neighbours.

The picture in low-income areas is even less encouraging. Researchers have studied two areas in Cape Town where the state explicitly sought to mix low-income African and coloured people in public housing projects: Delft South (Oldfield, 2004) and Westlake (Lemanski, 2006b). In Delft South, residents' social lives, shopping patterns, and schooling divided along racial lines, as African and coloured residents continued to utilise the racially-defined networks and facilities that they had used prior to moving into a desegregated residential area.<sup>6</sup> Neighbours interacted more in Westlake, however, perhaps because the neighbourhood's location, surrounded by wealthy suburbs with expensive facilities, meant that poor African and coloured residents were compelled to use the same facilities because these were the only ones they could afford to use..

Overall, very few South Africans live in racially integrated neighbourhoods, and few of those that do so live in neighbourhoods that can be described as meaningfully integrated across racial lines. Even when the market or the state throws people from different racial groups together in a neighbourhood, there is little interaction, and racial othering and prejudice remain commonplace.

Whilst there has been very little residential desegregation, there has been some desegregation of schools. This has been made possible by the absence of zoning restrictions. Large numbers of young people do not attend the closest schools, and some undergo lengthy commutes to attend schools that are distant from their homes. Overall, school desegregation remains modest: Most African children attend schools in townships or rural areas where all of the other children are also African. It is only a small and fortunate minority that is able to get access to the better schools found in formerly coloured and, especially, formerly white areas.

---

<sup>6</sup> My own interviews with residents of Delft indicate a deep racial divide between African and coloured neighbours.

But a minority of children – including many white, Indian and coloured children, together with a small minority of African children – do undergo the experience of attending a multi-racial school. The pioneering study of the racial desegregation of a public school by Dolby (2001), based on research in a Durban high school in 1996. Dolby's subject school had been a white school in a lower-income white residential area. By 1996, two-thirds of the students were black. The one-third that were white were typically poor-performing students from poorer homes who could not escape to better, more expensive schools. Almost all of the teachers, however, were white, and they sought to preserve the school's 'white' identity through, for example, compelling boys to play rugby and wear the school blazer. Students group along racial lines on the school field. Racial epithets are common in the corridors. The combination of threatened or resentful white teachers and students, and a growing majority of black students, made for an explosive mix.

The environment at Dolby's school was very highly racialised, but school pupils did not simply reproduce an apartheid-style conception of race in terms of biology, history or past culture. Rather, they renegotiated race around the dynamics of taste (especially clothes, music and clubs). Black pupils define blackness not in terms of Zulu tradition ('this is the [19]90s', one girl protests to a white teacher who anachronistically imagines that Zulu-speaking girls attend the 'traditional' Zulu reed dance) but in terms of global African-American culture (and icons such as Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, Whitney Houston, and top rap-artists). But coloured students also draw on African-American fashion in defining their cultural identity: Levi jeans, Dickies chino pants, baseball warm-up jackets. White students draw on different global influences: more sexy clothing, techno music, and so on. Black, Indian, coloured and white students value different clothes, listen to different music, play different sports, go to different clubs. Deviants – such as an African girl who wears clothing perceived as 'white' – are humiliated or ostracized. By policing the adopted cultural markers of race, the students themselves actively reproduce racial difference and division.

Similar research was conducted in schools in Cape Town (Soudien, 1998, 2004) and Johannesburg (Dawson, 2003). Most recently, Gooskens (2006) digs into this same vein of research, drawing on fieldwork conducted among children attending a formerly white school in southern Cape Town. Gooskens also finds that perceptions of similarity and difference are based on gender, lifestyle, class, religion, moral values and language, rather than race *per se* – although race remains ever present in their thoughts and language. In Gooskens' account, adolescents blend a rejection of racial identification or categorization with racial name-calling.

Malls are an important site of inter-racial interaction. Nkuna (2006) describes how young people of all races try to construct a new multi-racial identity in The Zone, a mall in Johannesburg. The identity is based on similar tastes in clothing (specific brands), music, and other markers of fashion (hair, body piercing). Because these entail spending money, this is a middle class world. Almost half of the young people at The Zone are students in higher education, and almost all attended private schools or formerly white schools in the suburbs. Very few attended township schools. The culture is not only consumerist, but embraces American styles whilst rejecting 'parochial' South African fashions (such as kwaito music).

Survey data suggest that the workplace is an important site of inter-racial interaction. The 2005 Cape Area Study found that very small minorities of each race group said that they worked in mono-racial environments (see Figure 2 above). Unfortunately, there appears to be almost no published research on the everyday reality of inter-racial interactions in the post-apartheid workplace. Recent studies provide only snippets of information or analysis on race. Von Holdt (2003, 2005) provides a compelling account of the importance of race in understanding dynamics in a steelmill at the end of apartheid, but his research stops in the mid-1990s. He emphasizes how the job colour bar and racial segregation of facilities were accompanied by the routine use of violence to maintain white *baaskap* (supremacy).<sup>7</sup> Bezuidenhout (2005) describes four engineering factories, where the basic racial order has barely changed with the transition from apartheid to democracy, although there is no suggestion that it is maintained now through violence. He also points to the racialised perception among African workers that they are still discriminated against, even though this discrimination is now based on seniority within the company rather than (explicitly) race. Kenny's (2005) study of supermarkets points to the importance of white security personnel in perpetuating a racial order. The most interesting window into race in the workplace is in research by a black scholar in a car-manufacturing plant. 'Ordinary workers', Masondo writes, 'feel more comfortable' in mono-racial social groups, especially because of linguistic barriers. But black and white salaried staff do interact: they 'are always together during lunch hours' (Masondo, 2005: 165). Black workers complain that the new black managers 'treat us the same way as the white managers did. They shout at us as if we are their children.' (168).

Racial interactions in the workplace clearly warrant further research. To what extent, or in what ways, or how often, do inter-racial interactions transcend workplace hierarchies? What are the consequences of racialised hierarchy (or its erosion) in the workplace for the reproduction (or erosion) of race-thinking?

---

<sup>7</sup> Carrim (1986) provided a much more optimistic account of African-Indian interactions.

## Discriminatory Attitudes and Experiences

Ethnographic research in neighbourhoods and schools suggests that racial differences and divisions remain pronounced, but finds little evidence of the kind of brutal racism associated with white South Africans in the early apartheid period. Experimental research on behaviour and survey –based research on attitudes supports this assessment. Experimental research on race has been pioneered in South Africa by Justine Burns. In one of Burns' experiments, secondary school students in Cape Town played the 'dictator game', in which players are given money and then choose how much to pass onto anonymous 'partners', whose photo they have seen but otherwise know nothing about. Using a photo allowed Burns to test for the effect of the partners' race, or at least race in terms of physical appearance. Burns found that there was no direct race effect, i.e. that players did not discriminate against partners who appeared to be racially different. This behaviour appeared to be motivated by an aversion to inherited inequality, and racial appearance was taken as a proxy for inherited inequality (Burns, 2004).

The participants in Burns' experiments know that they are in an experiment, and this might affect their behaviour. The participants do not know, however, that inter-racial interaction is the focus of the research. In surveys, respondents might also select responses in the knowledge that they are being researched, but the use of 'vignettes' can help to disguise the focus of the research. Respondents are presented with one or more vignettes describing a situation, followed by a question or series of questions related to the situation. Sniderman and Piazza (1993) used vignettes to examine 'modern' forms of racism in the USA. In their 'laid-off worker' vignette, respondents were presented with a scenario in which a person (or subject) is retrenched, and are then invited to suggest how much (if any) financial assistance that person should receive from the government whilst looking for work. The scenario varies insofar as the subject (or retrenched person) is given different characteristics: white or black, male or female, younger or older, single or married, with or without children, and dependable or not dependable. The 2003 Cape Area Study, conducted with a small sample in Cape Town, employed a variant of the 'laid-off worker' vignette to probe the effects of race on perceptions of distributive justice. By including a range of characteristics for each subject, the respondent's attention is being diverted in part at least from the racial characteristic.

Questions about distributive justice are a telling test of one dimension of racial attitudes because the official ideology of apartheid emphasised that each racial group (and each ethnic group within the African population) should look after its own: white South Africans were not responsible for the poverty of black South Africans; rich South Africans were only responsible for poor South Africans if



they were members of the same racially-demarcated 'community'. One might expect that the over-riding racialisation of society under apartheid and the continuing salience of race have resulted in a close correlation between race and attitudes toward distribution or distributive justice. The government, African National Congress and the media frequently accuse white South Africans of being opposed to 'transformation', i.e. to redistributive social and economic policies. If this was the case, then we would expect to find that South Africans will assess the desert of other members of their own racial group (i.e. 'insiders') more favourably or positively than that of members of other racial groups (i.e. 'outsiders').

The results of the 'laid-off worker' experiment in Cape Town in 2003 suggested that the race of the respondent and the race of the subject were of little import in whether a respondent considered a subject deserving. For example, white respondents did *not* discriminate significantly against African or coloured subjects. But there were clear (and counter-intuitive) race effects on the amount that the respondent said that the subject should receive per month from the government. White respondents were more generous, perhaps because they had a more inflated view of what constituted a 'minimum' income; more curiously, black and coloured respondents as well as white respondents suggested that larger grants be made to white than to African or coloured subjects (Seekings, 2005).

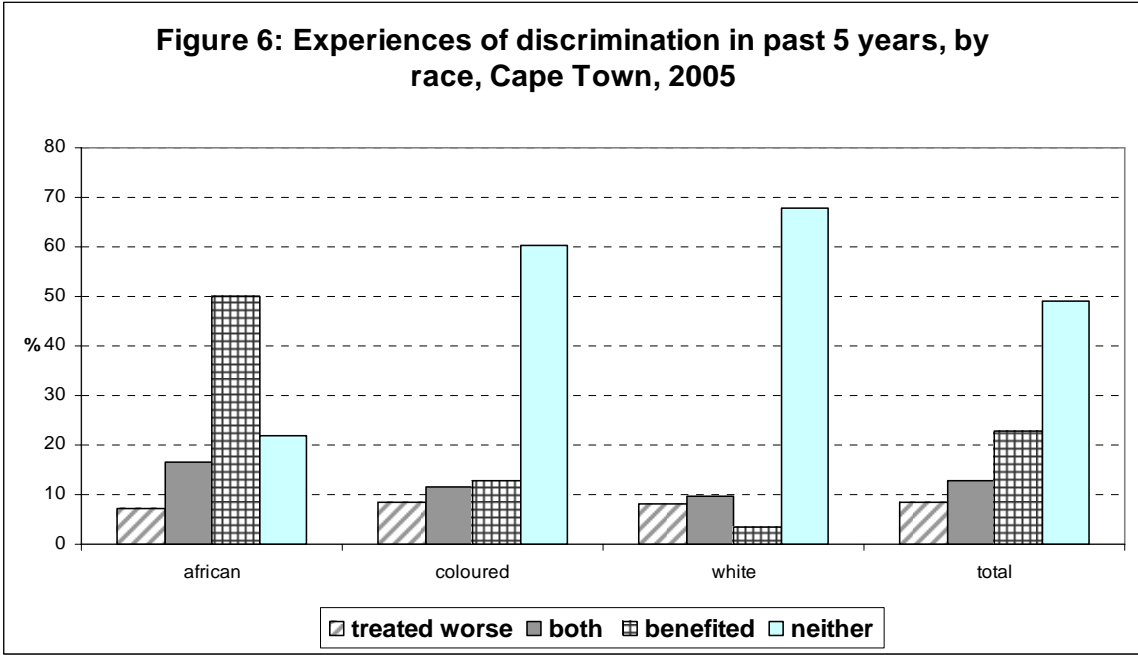
The 2005 Cape Area Study extended this vignette (as well as asking several other vignette-style questions), with a larger sample, but also confined to Cape Town. Instead of asking about the scenario of a retrenched worker, respondents in 2005 were presented with a wider range of circumstances in which a subject might be considered deserving of financial assistance. Respondents were first told that 'The government provides grants to some people in need, for example old-age pensions to elderly people. I am going to describe a situation, and then ask you what the government should do to help the person involved.' A specific subject was then described. The subjects varied between interviews. Firstly, the general circumstances of the subject varied. Some subjects were described as retrenched workers, others as people who were sick; some were disabled and others abandoned by husbands; and so on. A range of other social and demographic characteristics – including race – were varied also. The 2005 data showed most of the same patterns as the 2003 data: the race of the subject made little or no difference, white respondents were a little less positive in their initial assessment of desert, but a lot more generous in the sums they 'awarded'. Unlike 2003, there was no indication that respondents were more generous to white subjects. In this dimension of social attitudes, race plays little effect, and there is no little or no evidence of racism or racial discrimination. These

findings from survey vignettes are not dissimilar to Burns’ findings using data from field experiments.

White South Africans have no qualms, however, in expressing opposition to race-based policies, such as affirmative action and BEE. Several studies suggest that there is wide and strong support for government interventions to help the poor, but only among African people is there a majority in favour of race-based affirmative action (in employment), black economic empowerment or redistribution of land (ILO, 2004; Roberts, 2006).

Survey data suggest that most South Africans believe that ‘race relations’ have improved since the end of apartheid, and neither surveys nor field experiments provide evidence of significant racial discrimination in attitudes or experimental behaviour. But discrimination might persist in other domains, and it is even more likely that discrimination is *perceived* as continuing.

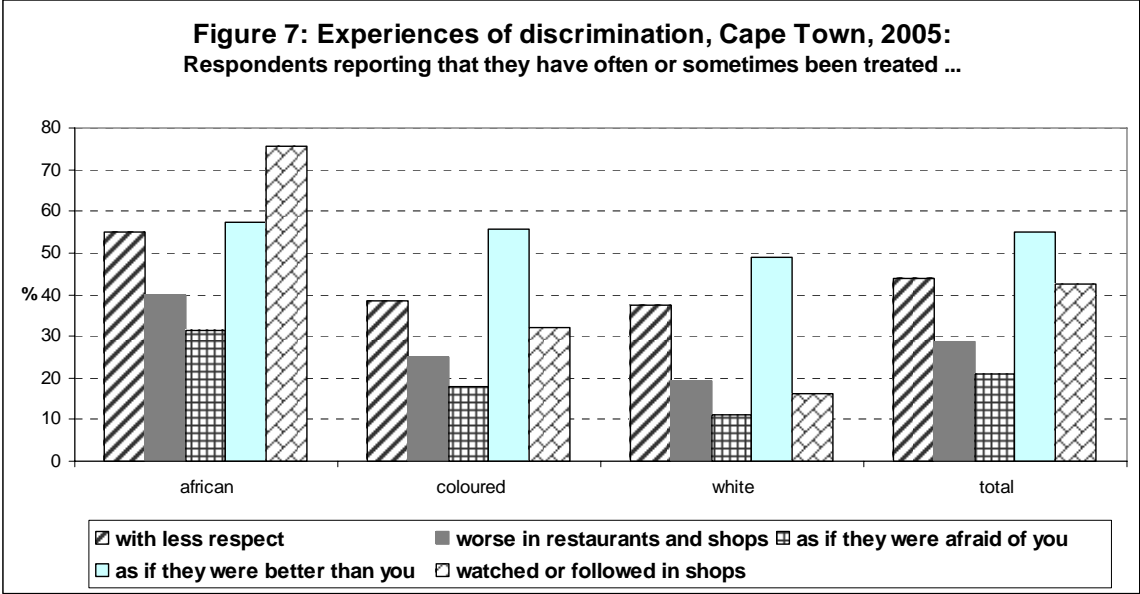
The 2005 Cape Area Study asked about recent experiences of discrimination. Respondents were asked whether, in the five years since 2000, they had ‘been treated worse than other people or benefited’ because of their race. Very few respondents said that they had experienced negative racial discrimination (see Figure 6). Most African respondents said that they had benefited because they were black, whilst most coloured and white respondents said that they had neither benefited not been treated worse.



This was followed by a series of questions about experiences in specific settings (see Figure 7). Almost all African respondents reported that they had been watched or followed in shops, compared to a minority of coloured respondents

and very few white respondents. Larger proportions of African respondents than coloured or white respondents reported experiencing each of the other four situations (being treated with less respect, being treated worse in restaurants and shops, being treated by people as if they were afraid of you, and being treated by other people as if they were better than you). But in these other four situations the proportions of African, coloured and white respondents who reported that they had had the experience were not massively different. For example, just over one half of African respondents reported being treated with less respect, compared to over one-third of coloured and white respondents.

These results are broadly consistent with the findings of the countrywide 2003 SASAS. Most South Africans reported that they never feel that they are being discriminated against. A larger minority of white and Indian people report experiencing discrimination than among African or coloured people. Discrimination is perceived as occurring primarily at work (especially by African people), when applying for jobs (especially among white and coloured people), and in shops (especially among white people, curiously) (Roefs, 2006: 88-9).



Unfortunately there is no experimental research in South Africa similar to the work conducted by Pager in the USA, assessing the extent and patterns of racial (or other) discrimination in the labour market. If such research was conducted, however, it is likely that it would find that in occupations in which they are applicants from all racial groups (i.e. excluding unskilled employment), racial discrimination is practiced in favour of black applicants through affirmative action and BEE policies.

## Discrimination and Disadvantage

The effects of race in the labour market were much studied in the early 1990s. From the 1920s to the 1970s, racial discrimination generally confined African people to low-paid occupations. When African and white people were in the same occupation – for examples, teaching and the police – white employees were paid more than their African counterparts. But this picture began to change dramatically from the 1970s. Crankshaw (1997) demonstrated the steady, and at times rapid, rise of African workers into better-paid occupations in the later apartheid period. Moll (2000) showed that the share of inequality in the distribution of wages that was accounted for by inter-racial differences declined from 65 percent in 1980 to 42 percent in 1993, whilst the share accounted for by intra-racial differences rose from 35 percent to 58 percent. The racial wage gap declined but still remained large, with median earnings for African workers only about one-quarter of the median for white workers, in 1995 (Bhorat and Leibbrandt, 2001: 83; see also Burger and Woolard, 2005: 19). But a series of studies demonstrated that this persistent racial wage gap was due primarily to differences in education, skill, location (urban/rural), and economic sector, rather than by racial discrimination *per se*. Moll (2000) also found that racial discrimination amounted to 20 percent of mean African wage in 1980 but just 12 percent in 1993. Whilst several other studies used data from the mid-1990s to re-examine racial wage discrimination, there has been a dearth of studies using post-1995 data. Several recent studies of the labour market pay no attention at all to racial discrimination, focusing instead on the unambiguously pressing topic of unemployment and job creation (e.g. Burger and Woolard, 2005; Oosthuizen, 2006).<sup>8</sup>

There appears to be just one study of racial discrimination using post-1995 data. Burger and Jafta (2006) uses a set of decomposition techniques on data from OHSs and LFSs between 1995 and 2004 to assess changes over time in the ‘unexplained’ part of the racial gap in both racial employment and (formal sector) wage gaps. – with ‘unexplained’ meaning unexplained by other readily measured variables such as years of schooling and location. They find that there has been a narrowing of the racial wage gap since 1994 at the top end of the wage distribution, but not overall. The unexplained element remains, i.e. being white apparently continues to earn a premium in the labour market, essentially

---

<sup>8</sup> Some studies persist in the tradition of Mbeki’s “two nations” analysis. Moleke (2006), for example, concludes that ‘race still matters’ and ‘the labour market is far from being deracialised’ on the basis of evidence of racial *inequalities*, i.e. differences in living conditions, skills and so on between the ‘average’ white person and average African person. This kind of analysis implicitly defines racialisation in terms that render it impossible to deracialise the labour market: given persisting inequalities within the African population, ‘deracialisation’ would require reducing the skills and living conditions of a large portion of each generation of white South Africans to the levels of their most disadvantaged African compatriots.

because white people earn higher returns on their education than do Indian, coloured or, especially, African people.

As most of these econometric studies emphasise, returns to education surely continue to vary by race because of the enormous but unmeasured differences in the quality of education, combined with the similarly unmeasured benefits that social capital bring to young people from middle-class backgrounds. Taking such factors into account would surely reduce considerably the ‘unexplained’ component of the racial wage gap, and reduce further the importance of racial discrimination relative to other factors such as inequalities in real skills and useful contacts.

Burger and Jafta’s work points to the importance of distinguishing between different sections of the labour market. Unlike in (say) Brazil or the USA, there are few unskilled white workers competing with black workers for low-paid employment (and of the small number of unskilled white workers, some might have hidden class advantages, for example young people with part-time jobs as waitresses). It is at the top end of the labour market that the effects of persistent racial discrimination against African people or affirmative action in their benefit would be concentrated. There are unfortunately few studies of the top end of the labour market, especially among young entrants. But some data suggests that, in some sectors, patterns of discrimination have changed markedly over very short periods of time. In the late 1990s, the public sector was the primary venue for affirmative action. The proportion of public sector managers who were African rose from 30 percent in 1995 to 51 percent in 2001. The proportion of senior managers who were African rose from 33 percent to 43 percent (Thompson and Woolard, 2002). As many as 70 percent of all African graduates get their first job in the public sector (cited in Altman, 2006: 69). In the early 2000s, legislation has pushed larger private sector employers to similar shifts in employment patterns. There has also been a dramatic shrinkage in the racial wage gap among managers (cited in Altman, 2006).

A second, complicating factor in the analysis of racial discrimination in labour market outcomes (i.e. employment and wages) using cross-sectional data is that substantial numbers of younger white people have emigrated, or are at least outside of the country for long periods of time. Whilst they might be outside the South African labour market, their choice is probably not entirely exogenous to conditions in the labour market. I am unaware of any studies that examine the real effects of affirmative action legislation on the labour market for school-leavers or, especially, university graduates, but there is no shortage of anecdotal evidence that young white men and women *believe* that affirmative action policies and practices are foreclosing opportunities for employment, and that this perception influences decisions about emigration. If it was true that white

graduates are emigrating to avoid unemployment (perhaps because they would 'choose' unemployment over employment in occupations that are inferior to those to which they aspired), then emigration would cause analyses of cross-sectional data to *under-estimate* the effects of affirmative action.

Panel studies offer a promising way forward for the empirical analysis of patterns and dynamics of advantage and disadvantage in post-apartheid South Africa. One such study is the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS), which interviewed a representative sample of almost 5,000 young people (aged between 14 and 22) in 2002, and has since re-interviewed this panel three times (in 2003-04, 2005, and 2006) (see Lam *et al.*, 2005). CAPS has collected detailed data on schooling and entry into the labour market, as well as on sexual and reproductive health and experiences within families and households. Most data are collected from the young people themselves, but data are also collected from parents and other older household members, and data on individuals and households have been combined with community- and school-level data. The problem with panel studies is that data-collection and -cleaning are so time-consuming that there are inevitable delays before panel data are available for analysis and longer delays before analyses are completed.<sup>9</sup> A second problem is that attrition results in incomplete data. Given the difficulties of collecting data from or on emigrants, it is likely that CAPS will be able to offer only a partial picture of how and why and with what consequences young people enter the labour market. The South African Human Sciences Research Council is also conducting panel studies among cohorts of matriculants (i.e. students writing the grade 12 examination) and university graduates, which will provide a fuller picture of what is happening at the top end of the labour market.

It is likely, however, that panel studies will confirm the following. Most children from poor neighbourhoods – almost all of whom are African – grow up in home environments that are uncondusive to educational success, and attend schools where the quality of education is very poor. Many remain in school until their late teens, but are unable to acquire many skills. Their ability to find employment is constrained by their lack of skills and experience, their location far from most job opportunities, and their lack of contacts with jobs who could help them find employment. Many move into the underclass of chronically unemployed, with intermittent short spells of unskilled work. On the other hand, children from middle-class neighbourhoods – who comprise rapidly rising numbers of African as well as Indian and white children – attend better schools, enjoy the benefits of middle-class home environments, and gain work experience through part-time jobs (especially in school holidays). They move into higher education and then into the labour market. White middle-class

---

<sup>9</sup> Most data from the first three waves of CAPS became available publicly and for free, over the internet, in December 2006.

children enjoy the relative benefits of wider and deeper social networks, but the disadvantage of being white in an affirmative action environment.

## Conclusion

The available evidence suggests that race remains of enormous social and cultural importance despite a decline in economic importance. Earnings and incomes reflect race far more than class. This raises questions, however, about the meaning of class in the South African context. In its intellectual seedbed in north-west Europe during the industrial revolution, there was generally a close relationship between 'objective' class positions (in terms of relationships to the means of production) and everyday cultures. As E.P. Thompson argued famously, the working class was made culturally as well as through changes in the form and shape of capitalism. In South Africa, 'race' – understood as a social and cultural phenomenon, not biologically – has shaped profoundly cultural change, interacting complexly with the growth of modern state and a capitalist economy.

Insofar as this is the case, then South Africa would appear to be the opposite to Brazil, where race is of limited cultural and even social importance but of continuing economic significance. In the terms used by Telles (2005), in Brazil there is racism in terms of vertical relations but not of horizontal relations, whilst in South Africa there is racism in terms of horizontal relations but not of vertical relations. In Brazil, inter-racial marriage and racial discrimination in employment are both common. In South Africa, after apartheid (and subject to caution with respect to the extent and effect of affirmative action), neither is common.

But the available evidence on post-apartheid South Africa is sadly limited. Little progress has been made yet with respect to two key kinds of study. First, data from panel studies is yet to be used to explore precisely how and why 'race' shapes progress through school and into the labour market. Secondly, there are still too few studies of how race, class and culture are made and understood in the lived experience of South Africans, at home, in neighbourhoods, in schools and in workplaces.<sup>10</sup> In addition, there is a dearth of empirical research on how employers and others comply with official requirements to categorise people,<sup>11</sup> and on the extent or effects of pro-African racial discrimination (i.e. affirmative

---

<sup>10</sup> Such studies might usefully draw on Bourdieu.

<sup>11</sup> Teppo (2004: 209-10) has a wonderful account of how school teachers do so: by getting the students themselves, collectively, to count students by race.

action) in employment.<sup>12</sup> In South Africa, as in Brazil, we are only beginning to unravel the complicated interactions of race, class and culture in the contemporary context.

---

<sup>12</sup> The case of the University of Cape Town (UCT) might be instructive. The Employment Equity Act requires employers such as UCT to determine targets for racial transformation, and to report on their progress in meeting these targets. In the absence of will to retrench long-standing employees – i.e. staff appointed under apartheid – employers have to achieve transformation through the slow pace of natural turnover. This means that most or all new appointments have to be from designated groups. Whatever the rhetoric of formal policy declarations, the reality of appointments is increasingly that young white men, and to a lesser extent young white women, cannot be appointed to permanent positions. ‘Transformation’ is slow, but there is in effect a ‘colour bar’ on young academic appointments, as there was under apartheid.



# Appendix

## ***Attitudes towards inter-racial marriage within family, by race of respondent and race of prospective spouse***

Apartheid-era racial classification of respondent		Race of prospective spouse			
		Black/African	coloured	indian	white
African	mean	1.75	-0.15	-0.49	-0.16
	sd	0.75	1.49	1.44	1.47
	n	408	408	408	408
Coloured	mean	0.55	1.26	0.63	0.78
	sd	1.21	0.96	1.17	1.13
	n	478	478	478	478
White	mean	-0.25	-0.02	-0.12	0.87
	sd	1.08	1.05	1.03	1.02
	n	252	252	252	252
Other	mean	0.68	0.64	-0.28	0.61
	sd	1.52	1.33	1.52	1.35
	n	35	35	35	35

**Note:** possible scores range from -2 to +2; negative scores indicate disapproval, positive scores approval. sd standard deviation.  
**Source:** Cape Area Study, 2005

## References

- Adhikari, Mohamed (2005), *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community* (Ohio UP, 2005; Double Storey, 2006).
- Altman, Miriam (2006), 'Wage determination in South Africa: What do we know?' *Transformation* 60: 58-89.
- Ashforth, Adam (2005), *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Battersby, J. (2004), '[Cape Town's Model C Schools: Desegregated and Desegregating Spaces?](#)', *Urban Forum* 15.3, 279-291.
- Bezuidenhout, Andries (2005), 'Post-colonial workplace regimes in the engineering industry in South Africa', in Edward Webster and Karl von Holdt (eds), *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press): 73-96.
- Bhorat, Haroon, and Murray Leibbrandt (2001), 'Correlates of Vulnerability in the South African Labour Market', in Haroon Bhorat, Murray Leibbrandt, Muzi Maziya, Servaas van der Berg and Ingrid Woolard, *Fighting Poverty: Labour Markets and Inequality in South Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press).
- Broadbridge, Helen (2001), *Negotiating Post-Apartheid Boundaries and Identities: An Anthropological Study of the Creation of a Cape Town Suburb*, unpublished PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University.
- Burger, Rolof, and Rachel Jafta (2006), 'Returns to Race: Labour Market Discrimination in Post-Apartheid South Africa', University of Stellenbosch: *Stellenbosch Economic Working Paper* no 04/06.
- Burns, Justine (2004), 'Inequality Aversion and Group Identity in a Segmented Society'.
- Carrim, Yunus (1986), 'Trade Unionism in Natal: Shopfloor relations between Indian and African workers', *South African Labour Bulletin* 11,4: 44-64.
- Christopher, A.J. (2001), 'Urban Segregation in Post-apartheid South Africa'. *Urban Studies* 38,3: 449-466.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002), "'To define the indefinable": population classification and the census in South Africa', *Area* vol.34, no.4;

\_\_\_\_\_ (2005), 'Further Progress in the Desegregation of South African towns and cities, 1996-2001', *Development Southern Africa* 22,2 (June): 267-76.

Crankshaw, Owen (1997), *Race, Class and the Changing Division of Labour under Apartheid* (London: Routledge).

\_\_\_\_\_ and Caroline White (1995), 'Racial desegregation and the origins of slums in Johannesburg's inner city', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 19,4: 622-38.

Crijns, A.G.J. (1959), *Race Relations and Race Attitudes in South Africa* (Nijmegen: Drukkerij Gebr. Janssen N.V.).

Dawson, Marcelle (2003), *Identity and Context: Friendship and Friction in a South African High School* (M.A. dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University).

Distiller, Natasha, and Melissa Steyn (eds, 2004), *Under Construction: Race and Identity in South Africa Today* (Johannesburg: Heinemann).

Dixon, John, Don Foster, Kevin Durrheim and Lindy Wilbraham (1994), 'Discourse and the politics of space in South Africa: the squatter crisis', *Discourse and Society* 5,3.

Dolby, Nadine (2001), *Constructing Race: Youth, Identity and Popular Culture in South Africa* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

Foster, Don, and Joha Louw-Potgieter (eds, 1991), *Social Psychology in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Lexicon).

\_\_\_\_\_ and Gillian Finchilescu (1986), 'Contact in a non-contact society: The case of South Africa', in M. Hewstone and R. Brown (eds), *Contact and Conflict in Inter-Group Encounters* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Gibson, James (2004), *Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation?* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council Press).

Gooskens, Imke (2006), 'Boundaries and crossing points: Children, geography and identity in the Fish Hoek Valley'. *Social Dynamics* 32,1 (June): ...

Grossberg, Arlene, Jaré Struwig and Udesch Pillay (2006), 'Multicultural national identity and pride', in Udesch Pillay, Ben Roberts and Stephen Rule (eds), *South African Social Attitudes: Changing Times, Diverse Voices* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council): 54-76.

Hamel, Elizabeth, Mollyann Brodie and Richard Morin (2004), 'A Survey of South Africa Ten Years into the New Democracy', paper presented at the 59<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Phoenix, Arizona (May).

ILO (2004), *Economic Security for a Better World* (Geneva: International Labour Office).

Kenny, Bridget (2005), 'The "market hegemonic" workplace order in food retailing', in Edward Webster and Karl von Holdt (eds), *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press): 217-41.

Klandermans, Bert, Marlene Roefs & Johan Olivier (eds) (2001), *The State of the People: Citizens, Civil Society and Governance in South Africa, 1994-2000* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council).

Kuper, Leo, Hilstan Watts and Ronald Davies (1958), *Durban: A Study of Racial Ecology* (London: Jonathan Cape).

Lam, David, Jeremy Seekings *et al.* 2005. 'The Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS): An Introduction and User's Guide' (Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town)

Lemanski, Charlotte (2006a), 'The impact of residential desegregation on social integration: Evidence from a South African neighbourhood', *Geoforum* 37: 417-435.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2006b), 'Spaces of Exclusivity or Connection: Linkages between a Gated Community and its Poorer Neighbour in a Cape Town Master Plan Development', *Urban Studies* 43,2 (February): 397-402.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2006c), 'Desegregation and integration as linked or distinct? Evidence from a previously "White" suburb in post-apartheid Cape Town', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30,3: 564-86.

MacCrone, I.D. (1949), 'Race Attitudes: An Analysis and Interpretation', in E. Hellman (ed.), *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Maré, Gerhard (2001), 'Race counts in contemporary South Africa: "an illusion of ordinariness"', *Transformation* 47: 75-93.

Masondo, David (2005), 'Trade liberalisation and work restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa: A case-study of BMW', in Edward Webster and Karl von Holdt (eds), *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press): 149-172.

Moleke, Percy (2006), 'The state of labour market deracialisation', in Sakhela Buhlungu, John Daniel, Roger Southall and Jessica Lutchman (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2005-2006* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council Press): 202-22.

Moll, Peter (2000), 'Discrimination is declining in South Africa but inequality is not', *Journal for Studies in Economics and Econometrics* 24,3: 91-108.

Morris, Alan (1999), *Bleakness and Light: Inner-city transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press).

Norval, Aletta (1996), *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London: Verso).

Nkuna, Lucert (2006), "'Fitting-In" to a "Classy Place": The Zone and Youth Identity', in Peter Alexander, Marcelle Dawson and Meera Ichharam (eds), *Globalisation and New Identities: A view from the middle* (Johannesburg: Jacana): 261-74.

Oldfield, Sophie (2000), 'The centrality of Community Capacity in State Low-Income Housing Provision in Cape Town, South Africa', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24,4: 858-72.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004), 'Urban networks, community organising and race: an analysis of racial integration in a desegregated South African neighbourhood', *Geoforum* 35.2: 189-201.

O'Meara, Dan (1996), *Forty Lost Years: The apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan).

Oosthuizen, Morne (2006), 'The post-apartheid labour market: 1995-2004', *DPRU Working Paper* no. 06/103 (Cape Town: Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town).

Posel, Deborah (1991), *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

\_\_\_\_\_ (2001a), 'What's in a Name? Racial categorisations under apartheid and their afterlife', *Transformation* (Durban) no.47.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2001b), 'Race and Common Sense: Racial classification in twentieth century South Africa', *African Studies Review* (October).

Preston-Whyte, Eleanor (1976), 'Race attitudes and behaviour: The case of domestic employment in white South African homes', *African Studies* 35,2.

Roberts, Ben (2004), 'The Happy Transition? Attitudes to Poverty and Inequality after a Decade of Democracy', in Udesch Pillay, Ben Roberts and Stephen Rule (eds), *South African Social Attitudes: Changing Times, Diverse Voices* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council): 101-30.

Roefs, Marlene (2006), 'Identity and race relations', in Udesch Pillay, Ben Roberts and Stephen Rule (eds), *South African Social Attitudes: Changing Times, Diverse Voices* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council): 77-97.

Russell, Margo (2003), 'Are urban black families nuclear? A comparative study of black and white South African family norms', *Social Dynamics* 29,2 (winter): 153-76.

Saff, Grant (1998) *Changing Cape Town: urban dynamics, policy and planning during the political transition in South Africa* (Washington DC: University Press of America).

Seekings, Jeremy (2005), 'The Colour of Desert: Race, Class and Distributive Justice in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *CSSR Working Paper* no.126 (Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town).

\_\_\_\_\_ and Nicoli Nattrass (2005), *Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

\_\_\_\_\_, with Tracy Jooste, Mirah Langer and Brendan Maughan-Brown (2005), 'Inequality and Diversity in Cape Town: An Introduction and User's Guide to

the 2005 Cape Area Study', *CSSR Working Paper* no.124 (Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town).

Sniderman, Paul and Thomas Piazza (1993), *The Scar of Race* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press).

Soudien, Crain (1998), "'We Know Why We're Here": The Experiences of African Children in a "Coloured" School in Cape Town', *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 1,1: 7-29.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004), 'Constituting the Class: An Analysis of the Process of Integration in South African Schools', in Linda Chisholm (ed.), *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC Press).

Steyn, Melissa (2001), *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa* (Albany: SUNY Press);

Telles, Edward (2005), *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Teppo, Annika (2004), *The Making of a Good White: A Historical Ethnography of the Rehabilitation of Poor Whites in a Suburb of Cape Town* (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki).

Van der Berghe, Pierre (1967), *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: John Wiley).

Von Holdt, Karl (2003), *Transition from Below: Forging Trade Unionism and Workplace Change in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press).

\_\_\_\_\_ (2005), 'Political transition and the changing workplace order in a South African steelworks', in Edward Webster and Karl von Holdt (eds), *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press): 45-71.