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**Inter-racial attitudes and interactions in
racially-mixed low-income neighbourhoods
in Cape Town, South Africa**

Singumbe Muyeba
Jeremy Seekings

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Singumbe Muyeba is a Research Associate in the CSSR and a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Cape Town.

Jeremy Seekings is Director of the Social Surveys Unit in the Centre for Social Science Research and a professor of Political Studies and Sociology at the University of Cape Town; email jeremy.seekings@uct.ac.za

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Abstract

Since the end of apartheid, many scholars of South Africa have shifted from a position of optimism about the prospects for racial desegregation and integration to one of scepticism. Racial segregation and antipathy appear to have deep and enduring roots in South Africa. Very few people live in racially integrated neighbourhoods. Most such neighbourhoods are middle-class or elite neighbourhoods, where integration is due to the rapid upward mobility of some 'African', 'coloured' and 'Indian' people into the middle class and elite. This paper examines a different and more unusual set of people living in racially-integrated residential neighbourhoods: low-income coloured and African people living in atypical new public housing projects, where state-subsidised houses were (unusually) allocated so as to create a mixed neighbourhood. Because people living in Delft South or Tambo Square – two neighbourhoods in Cape Town – did not choose to live in a racially-integrated, the study of their evolving inter-racial interactions helps to understand anew the possibility of transcending racial division in a society like South Africa. We find that residents of these neighbourhoods retain a highly racialised discourse and subscribe to some racial stereotypes. At the same time, however, a variety of positive inter-racial interactions occur, and friendships form, beyond people's expectations.

Introduction: From Hope to Scepticism

'Apartheid' in South Africa entailed systematic racial segregation between racial groups and discrimination against non-white groups. The Group Areas Act defined residential areas for the use of one or other racial group, and school as well as social spaces were strictly segregated. After the end of apartheid, racial discrimination other than affirmative action became illegal. The discourse of the 'rainbow nation' held out the possibility and hope that South Africans would overcome historic divisions and build a common identity and solidarity whilst acknowledging cultural diversity. In practice, however, hopes for desegregation have given way to disillusionment and scepticism. Residential and educational segregation persist, in practice, for most South Africans: Most South Africans

live in mono-racial neighbourhoods and their children attend mono-racial schools. Moreover, few South Africans have friends from other racial groups and inter-racial marriages are rare.

Even in social spaces that appear to be integrated, there is limited inter-racial interaction. Social psychologists have documented the paucity of inter-racial interaction in apparently mixed settings such as public beaches (Dixon and Durrheim, 2003), the dining halls of integrated universities (Schrieff *et al.*, 2005, 2010), and night-clubs (Tredoux and Dixon, 2009). Researchers in schools with racially-mixed student bodies report that inter-racial relationships are often difficult, linguistic differences impede interaction, and taste is racialised (Dolby, 2002; Soudien, 1998, 2004; Dawson, 2003; Vandayar and Jansen, 2008). Settlement by low-income 'African' people in otherwise 'white' middle-class suburbs has given rise to severe tensions (for examples: Dixon *et al.*, 1994; Saff, 1998). Even when the immigrants into a suburb are lower middle-class, some richer white residents move out (Morris, 1999) or at least take their children to schools elsewhere (Lemanski, 2006b). Indeed, white South Africans' embrace of gated residential neighbourhoods is often interpreted as a way of limiting inter-racial interaction. Children growing up in Cape Town overwhelmingly occupy racially-segregated spaces. Even where 'African', 'coloured' and 'white' neighbourhoods are close together, the mall might be the only significant non-racial space for most children, and little real inter-racial interaction occurs there (Bray *et al.*, 2010).

The persistence of informal segregation has led social psychologists working on South Africa to question the basic tenets of the 'contact hypothesis'. Formulated by Gordon Allport and others in the 1950s (see Allport, 1954), the contact hypothesis held that, under certain conditions, contact with members of other racial groups would lead to reduced prejudice and conflict. The same logic applied also to interactions between other kinds of groups besides 'racial' ones. Whilst the hypothesis has been 'one of the most successful ideas in the history of social psychology', the search for the full specification of the 'optimal' conditions for contact has led to it becoming more and more 'detached from (and sometimes irrelevant to) everyday life in divided societies', rendering it of little practical use in 'understanding or promoting social change'; 'there is little point in enumerating lengthy lists of boundary conditions for ideal contact without explaining how such conditions might be made relevant to the lived experiences of ordinary people in ordinary situations or without explaining how they might be implemented in particular contexts of inequality' (Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux, 2005: 697-8, 701). Close observation of interactions on beaches, in nightclubs and in university dining-halls suggests that the 'lived

experience of contact often led to the reestablishment of racial boundaries' (*ibid*: 704; see also Dixon *et al.*, 2008).

Accounts of interaction in racially-‘integrated’ neighbourhoods seem to corroborate this pessimistic conclusion. Whilst overall residential integration has proceeded slowly (Christopher, 2005), some elite suburbs have seen dramatic change (Borel-Saladin and Crankshaw, 2009). This reflects, above all, the very rapid growth of the non-white middle classes and elite as the barriers to upward mobility were removed (and then policies of affirmative action in employment and ‘black economic empowerment’ in business were implemented) (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). Many non-white South Africans with rising incomes have continued to live in formerly non-white areas, but many others have chosen to move into formerly ‘white’ or new, desegregated suburbs, which are safer and have better access to work and good schools. Racial ‘integration’ in such suburbs rarely entails much interaction, however, as residents live behind high walls. The best accounts of such suburbs are by young novelists grappling with the dilemmas of identify. In *Coconut*, Kopano Matlwa contrasts the gated residential estate where her character Ofilwe now lives with the township where Ofilwe lived before her family became rich.

‘No toddlers with snotty noses and grubby hands play in the streets in Little Valley Country Estate. Groups of teenage girls in bright T-shirts, old torn jeans and peak caps do not sit on the front lawn pointing and gossiping about the guys that walk past the gates of their homes. Older sisters do not play the *wailese* loud, so that so that those who know the tune can sing along as each mops, dusts and sweeps their homes clean. In Little Valley Country Estate the neighbours are the cars you see parked in their driveways and the children are the tennis balls that fly over the wall and into your pool. Here at home, Tshepo [her brother] was my only company and I his.’ (Matlwa, 2007: 89-90)

Not much actual ‘contact’ occurs in middle-class and elite neighbourhoods. In *Coconut*, when Ofilwe does have contact with white people, in the neighbourhood and at school, the interactions are infused with persistent racism.

There is more ‘community’, and more interaction, in poorer neighbourhoods, where walls are lower, gardens smaller, and people walk on rather than drive down the street. In two neighbourhoods in Cape Town where upwardly-mobile lower middle-class coloured people moved in alongside struggling white families, inter-racial interactions were common and generally positive (Broadbridge, 2001; Teppo, 2004). In these poorer neighbourhoods (and even in elite suburbs), however, patterns of inter-racial interaction might be affected by selection bias in that the non-white people who move into otherwise ‘white’

neighbourhoods might be unusually open to inter-racial interactions, otherwise they might have chosen to continue to live in predominantly ‘African’ or ‘coloured’ neighbourhoods. In the case of new neighbourhoods, this might be true of white residents also: they exercised some choice in moving into a mixed neighbourhood. In short, positive contact might follow rather than precede changing attitudes. Selection bias might occur also in the small proportion of schools that are racially-mixed. Insofar as there are positive aspects to inter-racial interactions in such schools (see, for example, Bray *et al.*, 2010), these might be because some of the students attending these schools do so in part *because* they are unusually open to inter-racial interaction. Students who are more hostile to inter-racial interaction are presumably more likely to attend mono-racial schools.

There is, in short, little evidence on the quality of inter-racial interactions in situations, outside of the workplace, where such interactions involve a representative sample of people. It is not the case, however, that there is no such evidence. In Cape Town, there are a handful of low-income neighbourhoods where more-or-less randomly-selected poor coloured and African people became neighbours through no choice of their own. One such neighbourhood is Westlake Village, in Cape Town’s southern suburbs. In this case, relationships between coloured and African residents are reported to be generally good (Lemanski, 2006a). In this paper, we extend the analysis to two other mixed, low-income neighbourhoods, Delft South (including the more recent neighbourhood of Delft Leiden) and Tambo Square. We also find evidence of improving inter-racial attitudes and relationships in these mixed neighbourhoods. Our explanation, however, differs from Lemanski’s.

It needs to be emphasised that this paper not only examines neighbourhoods that are atypical in Cape Town, but that Cape Town is itself atypical of South Africa. Whereas South Africa as a whole has a large ‘African’ majority, Cape Town was, until quite recently, almost entirely ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ (see Bickford-Smith *et al.*, 1999). At the time of colonial settlement in Cape Town in the seventeenth century, the population of the Western Cape comprised Khoi farmers and San hunter-gatherers. Bantu-language-speaking ‘African’ people had not migrated into the Western Cape. Some African people came to colonial Cape Town to work, but the city’s African population was tightly controlled during the twentieth century through ‘influx control’ and the removal of many women and children to the Eastern Cape. Only in the 1980s did the African population of Cape Town grow through both natural growth and rapid immigration. By the early 2000s, about one in three people in Cape Town was ‘African’; most of these are very poor. The city’s coloured population, which now amounts to about one half of the total population, spans the income

distribution and class structure. Nonetheless, Cape Town is distinctive in terms of the presence of a poor coloured population alongside a poor African population. In Cape Town, apartheid entailed attempts to exclude African people and the systematic imposition of segregation on the city's coloured population through, especially, forced removals (Western, 1981; Field, 2001). One in five people in the city is white, and almost all of these are rich.

In this paper we use the racial categories which were codified by the apartheid state under the Population Registration Act (see Posel, 2001; Christopher, 2002) and have become part of the 'common sense' of post-apartheid South African society (see Steyn, 2001; Adhikari, 2006; Seekings, 2008). The African population comprises, for the most part, people speaking Bantu languages. The white population comprises descendents of colonial settlers or subsequent immigrants from Europe. The category 'coloured' was and is a composite one, including people of Khoi and San descent, the descendents of slaves brought from the Dutch East Indies ('Malays') and people of mixed white-African descent. Whilst both the 'coloured' and 'African' populations are heterogeneous, there are nonetheless important cultural differences between them, most obviously with respect to language (most coloured people in Cape Town speak Afrikaans or English, whilst African people speak isiXhosa), but also with respect to religion, beliefs about ancestors, lifestyles and tastes.

Neighbourhoods that are mixed, but not by residents' choice

Since 1994, the South African state has assisted a very substantial number of poor people to access formal housing, primarily in towns and cities. The government's own claims (for example South Africa, 2008: 28) are misleadingly grandiose, but it is evident from travelling around any of South Africa's towns or cities that huge public housing projects have been built. New neighbourhoods, comprising rows of very small, generally identical, and often low-quality houses, have been built on the periphery of almost every town or city. In these new low-income neighbourhoods, residents have access to electricity, running water, sewerage, surfaced roads, and other basic infrastructure and services. In Cape Town – a city with a population of almost 3 million people – we calculate that at least one in five households is living in a state-subsidised house in a post-1994 low-income formal neighbourhood.

These new houses are subsidized by the state in that the state subsidises their construction. Access to a subsidized house is means-tested, supposedly limiting

access to the poor (although, it is clear, some houses are allocated corruptly and others are obtained fraudulently). In most new neighbourhoods, some people have extended their houses themselves. In general, however, the poor lack the resources to extend their housing, and the 'subsidy' from the state covers the entire construction cost, which is why houses are very small and simple. The state expenditure is a subsidy primarily in that it is paid to private developers who install infrastructure and build the houses.

Houses in these new neighbourhoods are not allocated through market mechanisms. The allocation procedure is a mix of political and bureaucratic procedures. Most state-subsidised housing is earmarked for people living in selected informal settlements through an essentially political process. 'Community' leaders or organizations select the beneficiaries from within the settlement, supposedly using fair procedures. Subject to satisfying the means-test and other criteria, the beneficiaries are then allocated newly-built houses by the project manager. In practice, in Cape Town, these procedures have resulted in new neighbourhoods which are as segregated racially as apartheid-era neighbourhoods. Because most informal settlements in Cape Town are almost entirely populated by African people, the new housing projects have almost entirely African populations. There is a large housing shortage for poor coloured people in Cape Town, but this is manifested in overcrowded formal housing in apartheid-era working-class neighbourhoods, rather than in informal settlements. Very few coloured people have benefitted from state-subsidised new housing in post-apartheid Cape Town.

Delft South and Tambo Square are exceptions to the mono-racial character of new state-funded housing projects. Delft is an area immediately to the east of Cape Town's international airport. Construction began (in Delft North) in the very last years of apartheid, when the land was owned by the government department responsible for 'coloured' housing. During the transition, it was agreed that the land would be developed by a new parastatal agency responsible for addressing the problems posed by burgeoning informal settlements in central Cape Town. One condition was attached to the transfer, however: 50 percent of all new houses had to be allocated to families on the existing municipal waiting-list, which meant coloured people living with kin in overcrowded accommodation. Tambo Square, to the south-west of the airport, also has an exceptional history. Located in the former buffer zone between the 'coloured' township of Manenberg and the African township of Guguletu, a political decision was taken to allocate new housing to people from both neighbouring areas. Houses in Tambo Square were allocated in the late 1990s. The first houses in Delft South were allocated at the same time, but construction has continued (and is continuing still) in the Delft area.

Delft South has been researched previously. In 1998-99, very soon after settlement, Oldfield interviewed residents and 'community' leaders in the first part of Delft South to be constructed. She found that the circumstances of obtaining houses had forged some trans-racial solidarity, but that residents retained their pre-existing relationships with kin or friends in their previous, segregated neighbourhoods. Despite their physical proximity as neighbours, coloured and African people's lives were patterned differently: most families continued to shop, attend schools and participate in social activities outside of Delft. The locations of their jobs also differed (Oldfield, 2000, 2004). A more recent study also found enduring racial mistrust and polarity in Delft South. In interviews, residents of Delft said that it would take time to overcome years of inter-racial suspicion. Little had been done for residents to learn about each other across racial divides. Residents might sometimes transcend the everyday racial divide, but these occasions would be contingent on the specific stimuli of collective grievances, and transitory (Millstein, 2007: 30-1).

The absence of substantial integration in Delft South has been contrasted with the case of Westlake Village, in southern Cape Town. Lemanski (2006a) attributed the deeper inter-racial interactions in Westlake Village in part to the fact that residents there were drawn from the surrounding area, and thus shared both a shared place attachment and some prior relationships. Residents also shared the same spaces of employment and their children shared spaces of schooling. In Delft South, in contrast, people's identities and primary relationships remained bound up with their previous and distant neighbourhoods. In these analyses, enduring networks and relationships are crucial. Given that houses in Tambo Square were supposed to be allocated to people from the adjacent but segregated and socially separated neighbourhoods of Manenberg and Guguletu, we expected therefore that many new residents would have retained their distinct social ties with their previous neighbourhoods, and there would be even less substantive integration in the new neighbourhood than in Delft South.

The importance of prior social relationships might suggest that continuing micro-segregation within mixed neighbourhoods has the 'naturally ordered' quality discussed by Molotch (1969) for South Chicago. Cultural differences pattern social life and interactions. In both Delft and Tambo Square, coloured and African people attend different churches (and in both cases, some coloured people are Muslim; one of our coloured interviewees in Tambo Square was a teacher at a madrassa). In terms of language, most coloured people speak Afrikaans while almost all African people speak isiXhosa. Although many African people speak Afrikaans well, few coloured people are able to speak isiXhosa. This linguistic divide is less important for children (in Delft South, as

there are no schools in Tambo Square). In some schools in Delft South, the medium of instruction is isiXhosa, and the student body is almost entirely African, but most schools teach in some combination of Afrikaans and English, and attract both African and coloured children. The nearby Airport shopping mall is frequented by both coloured and African people.

During 2009 – ten years after Oldfield conducted her research – we interviewed 21 coloured and African adult residents in Delft South (including Delft Leiden) and another ten in Tambo Square. Samples of interviewees were selected that were representative of these neighbourhoods in terms of geographical coverage. They included men and women, of various ages, employed and unemployed. The samples cannot be assumed, however, to be fully representative. Interviews were conducted by Xhosa-, Afrikaans- and English-speaking interviewers, as appropriate, using semi-structure interview guidelines. Most interviews lasted about 45 minutes, and interviewees were given a gift voucher for the local supermarket as a token of our gratitude.

Our interviews revealed two aspects of inter-racial attitudes and interactions. We found, first, that racial stereotypes or generalizations reminiscent of the post-apartheid context endure. At the same time, however, we find evidence for many (but not all) residents that relationships between people of different ‘races’ have deepened through proximity. Whilst some racialised differences endure, we found that these are now, in part but not entirely, understood in terms of cultural diversity rather than social division. We found many positive signs of increased inter-racial toleration and neighbourliness, and little evidence of racial tension.

Racial generalization in the ‘new’ South Africa

Under apartheid, racial prejudice and stereotyping was probably widespread, even among low-income people. Indeed, there is evidence that poor coloured people are, in general, more prejudiced against African people than are richer coloured (or white) people. In the 1990s, most poor coloured neighbourhoods were strongholds of the National Party, whilst the ‘liberal’ opposition and the African National Congress drew more support in middle-class coloured neighbourhoods (Eldridge and Seekings, 1995). It would hardly be surprising if we found evidence of persistent prejudice and stereotyping in mixed neighbourhoods such as Delft South and Tambo Square, in 2009. We certainly did find some evidence of this sort. In general, however, we found much more evidence that reflected a discourse of multi-cultural toleration, of inclusion in the ‘new’, democratic South Africa.

Enduring stereotypes and generalizations often revolve around crime. In our interviews, blunt generalizations were voiced only by African interviewees. According to one African woman in Delft South, “*I can’t trust coloureds, they steal, they steal everything*”, whereas “*black people, I trust them, they can’t steal*” (DS#25). Another African woman in the same neighbourhoods told us that “*I don’t feel good, because ... coloureds are messing up a lot, I don’t feel good about them*” (DS#29).

Coloured interviewees expressed racialised views in more subtle ways. Racialised views might be linked to differences within neighbourhoods. Tambo Square turns out to be heterogeneous, with a small southern section populated almost entirely by coloured people. Interviewees there speak of the insecurity in the other, more racially-mixed parts of Tambo Square:

I feel that it is safer here than on the other side ... It does not look right on the other side to me ... Friday and Saturday evenings.
(TS#34)

We have this bond, because we are more together on this side.
(TS#38)

Several residents told us that they thought that the other racial group disliked their racial group. This seems to reveal a group-based fear or sense of vulnerability. According to a coloured woman in Delft South:

Black people don’t want coloured people. Most of the black people don’t want coloured people. About two years ago we were reading [in] the paper [about] that guy [in] Khayelitsha, he buy a house that side but people don’t want him that side. (DS#18)

This seems to be a reference to an incident in which a coloured man acquired a house in Khayelitsha, but was prevented from moving in by local activists who insisted that housing there was for African people only. This woman, however, immediately qualified her generalisation, by saying ‘*that is why I say most of the black people is alright and other people is not alright*’ (DS#18).

Against these generalisations and stereotypes, we found lots of evidence of residents embracing a discourse of multi-cultural toleration. The coloured woman in Delft South quoted above elaborated:

You know that time, in apartheid, the coloured people stay that side and the black people stay that side but it’s not like that anymore, we must love black people and the black people must love us also. But we cannot stay there in Khayelitsha. (DS#18)

Similarly, according to another coloured woman in Delft South:

You see the other people like to say “No, [I] don’t like blacks”. I say no, it’s a new generation now and you must understand. ... In those

days you didn't used to live like this. I say, no, you are wrong, in this day we must learn to live together, you see. (DS#19w).

This was echoed by an African woman in Delft South:

We need to be people. To become one. If we can be separated and say this one must go and live there alone ... that can create hatred and a war; because when it comes that your child go and mess there ... everybody there will come and fight here. I like mixing a lot. (DS#31)

And an African man in the newer, Leiden section of Delft:

... years ago, the coloureds were live alone, the blacks were live alone, in the apartheid time, you see. Now it's a new South Africa now. We are living together as one, you see. Nobody can say now I am a kaffir, if he say [that I] am a kaffir, I have a right to lay a charge against him there, because [I] am not a kaffir anymore. ... So it's possible to live together, so that they must understand that we are all in one here in South Africa, nothing higher than somebody. Nobody is higher than somebody, yeah we are equally now, yeah (DL#2)

In these mixed neighbourhoods we found little evidence of racial animosity, or of pronounced and explicit racial prejudice. Rather, we found a positive attitude towards co-residence. In Tambo Square, for example, informants insisted that neighbours get on well with each other. According to one coloured woman: 'There are Africans and coloureds and ... Malawian people and so on, actually it is a mix now, ... but we get along well, and they get along well with us' (TS#38). This seems to be rooted in a very strong commitment, at least rhetorically, to non-racialism. This commitment is widespread. According to an African woman:

I don't see any difference. Because colour makes no difference. So if a person is black or white is the same. (TS#39)

Crucially, many residents emphasise that there are good and bad people in any racial group. According to one African man:

Not all the coloureds ... use the drugs. There's a right coloureds, there is a wrong coloureds, you see. Some of the coloureds use the drugs and they are silly. Some of coloureds, they don't use the drugs. They are human being like me, you see. ... I don't trust coloureds, you see, because coloureds, some of them are corrupt, some of them are good, that's why am saying to you. (DL#2)

Both coloured and African interviewees criticised their own racial group. According to one coloured woman in Delft South:

I can say I have a problem with coloured people because they steal our things. My toilet seat was stolen. I have put [in] a bath, a new bath, they took out that pipe ... While we are sleeping at night they are not sleeping. (DS#28)

An African woman in Delft South described coloured people as ‘people with respect’, and told us that, when she returned at night from church in Khayelitsha, coloured men would often enquire why she was walking at night; when she explained she was coming from church, they would escort her back to her house, whereas ‘*black [i.e. African] people, they only want money*’ (she had earlier been mugged by African adolescents, who took her bag). ‘*I like coloureds because they are also people. I like them because they are not dangerous ... and more over they are not people who make troubles. They know how to communicate with people*’ (DS#31).

Overall, a recognition of intra-racial diversity seems to us to be decisive in rooting a ‘new’ and inclusive South African discourse in racially-mixed neighbourhoods. Earlier research found strong notions of us and them, particularly in relation to differences in customs, culture and traditions and that cultural diversity was viewed as an obstacle (Millstein, 2007: 32). We found an acceptance of cultural diversity, and even a celebration of it (linked, in at least one interviewee’s mind, to the new South Africa being democratic – DL#2).

Learning multi-cultural co-existence

Several residents – especially coloured residents – spoke about how they had learnt to be more accommodating or tolerant. One coloured woman told us:

I can tell you in the beginning I was just always thinking, hey, kaffirs, how am I gonna stay with kaffirs? ... And when I move in, they moved in, I say, oh, no, [it] is not what I was thinking, they are people like everybody, and they know that to respect for each other. (DL#6)

One coloured woman related how, unusually, she had lived in the large ‘African’ township of Khayelitsha – when “*it was small, not [like] now*” – where she got used to living with African people, “*that’s why it is not a problem for me, but for the other people it is a problem*” because they are “*not used to the other people*” (DS#19w). Another coloured woman with no such background recalled that:

At the beginning it was not nice. Everyone thinks “this is my territory”, they just want to do anything. Okay, then you get people from Polokwane, fresh from the bush, now they want to come and take their bush manner out here! Broil their sheep’s head in their back yards! That is not right! (DL#3)

In some cases, the experience of living in more diverse neighbourhoods and of inter-racial interactions challenged people’s preconceptions. ‘Yes’, one coloured man told us, ‘*I must say that some of the Xhosas living here are very decent people; we greet each other, we ask one another how things are, we have no*

problems with them' (TS#35). Another coloured woman in Delft described her black ('Xhosa') neighbours as very respectable (DL#3).

Children are, perhaps, better placed to learn attitudes. One coloured man told us *'I think the most togetherness of races is all about kids, they don't see it as we see it as big people ... It's kids who can make a difference'*. He told us of a time when he gave his children some biscuits, and they happily shared them with other African boys from the street, without any hesitation (DL#1).

These statements about learning occur more often in our interviews with coloured residents, but there are cases of African interviewees voicing the same sentiments. An African woman highlighted the fact that all her neighbours were coloured and seemed to have no choice but to get to know people of a different population group. *'Now that we are a mix I see it's nice ... We get along, we borrow [from] each other'* (DS#26).

This commitment to non-racialism sits alongside multi-culturalism. Most residents recognise that there are cultural differences between coloured and African people, but do not associate these with any normative hierarchy. In Delft South, one resident told us about her neighbours' diverse customs:

We sometimes brew beer like in Eastern Cape. But we are always together, we are united. In such a way that ... we don't even worry about living with coloured people, we take them as our people. If they have a problem ... or things like funerals ..., we go. ...Ever since I came here, we as neighbours are living in peace. Sometimes you cannot live the way we do with your own family – I must put it that way. Because if you live with your family there are times where you don't get along ... But as we are staying mixing with different people from different places, we are like a family. If you find us staying as neighbours, chatting ... you would be sure that we are brothers and sisters. From that corner to that one [pointing] you won't really differentiate where a person came from ... we are like we came from one village and one family. (DS#23)

Language can be an impediment to interaction. A coloured couple, who have several African neighbours, said that *'sometime the one says "no man, [I] am sick with Afrikaans", then I say "no, you can speak English".'* The wife says that her husband *'understands a little bit of Xhosa, ... not so good but he can understand when the people is talking to him you see, and he's got Xhosa friends'* (DS#19w). Asked whether she would prefer to live in an all-African neighbourhood, one African woman said *'there would be more communication; it happens sometimes that as we are living with coloureds ..., perhaps you want*

to say something but you can't because you can't speak Afrikaans, their language; if we were all black people I think it would be very nice' (DS#29).

In interview after interview, however, residents emphasise that relationships are good with neighbours from different racial or cultural groups. According to a coloured man:

My neighbours like you know they have got all kinds of races, ... all kind of people: black, staying around me is muslims, my next door neighbour is muslim, my other next door neighbour is coloured and the opposite is black and the one next to them is white. So I have got four kind of race people here. But the communication with us is very good. I don't got a problem with them at all. Yah, I think [relationships] are good, I think they are good, there's no complaints about that. ... That house the other house the other house [to the far left, across the road] there staying, not this one there where the tyres is, there's a white lady and a coloured staying together there. Then there after the tyres in the zone there there is a black man and a white woman staying together. And the togetherness, they are staying together so but they are going maybe to the shebeen [bar] and sitting together and such things, walking past here. And there's a muslim there staying with a white woman, yah. There's plenty of white people from outside coming here to see the family here. (DL#1)

As in this interview, Muslims are often described as a different 'race'; it is unclear whether the Muslims in question are coloured South Africans or immigrants from Somalia or elsewhere, but it seems to underscore the cultural understanding of race.

An African woman in Delft South expressed the predominant view:

I don't have a problem with them. ... I even live with them here in my yard [at the back of the house], I don't have a problem. (DS#30)

A coloured woman went so far as to say:

We stay amongst Africans. There are Africans living opposite us. The majority here are Africans too. It is actually much better living amongst them. (DS#21)

Some people, she said, still held onto past attitudes and thought they were better than other people – meaning that some coloured people thought they were better than African people. Her retort to such racial arrogance was:

We stay in an under privilege neighbourhood. Do not think that you are better then the rest, because you are not! What are you doing in Delft? ... If you were better, then you do not belong in Delft. (DS#21)

When people encounter some unpleasant people in the other group, this can affect their view of the group as a whole. Above we quoted one African man who said that he did not trust coloured people because *some*, but not all, of them were untrustworthy.

Some of the coloureds ... think they are richer than us. ... They don't take us as a human being like them. You see, they took us as just nonsenses. ... The coloureds are rude ... Some of them are rude, some of them are not rude, but the most of them in the area here are very, very rude. They are using drugs, they are drinking ah liquor, so they are rude. (DL#2)

One coloured man drew a distinction between different African people in his immediate neighbourhood:

... these black people over there, my communication is more tight with them. The black people opposite me it's more tight. ... What I am trying to tell you is I am more intimate with the black people over there in the street and around here because they all know me. There's plenty of black people ... here, the people who are here is black people, and they know me, they know me very well, and we are very intimate. (DL#1)

The experience of living together is not uniformly positive. Other people say 'I cannot live with these people' (DL#3f), or 'I cannot, we have been trying for years' (DL#3). A coloured man complained that other people are resentful of inter-racial or inter-cultural interactions:

Jealousy, it's very much here. Not jealousy of races, jealousy of cultures together. [I] am a coloured, you are a coloured, and I don't like you, you as a coloured to go and talk too much to that white girl or white lady, white men or Muslim or whatever. Jealousy is the one thing I don't like. (DL#1)

Many people, however, seem to have learnt to live together.

How close are inter-racial relationships between neighbours?

Most of our interviewees say they have 'no problems' with neighbours of other races, or at least that they have no more problems with them than with same-race neighbours, and almost everyone greets their neighbours. Many have relationships that extend beyond these civilities. One coloured man tell us:

Yes, I must say some of the Xhosas living here are very decent people. We greet each other; we ask one another how things are. We have no problem with them. (TS#35).

This man's wife then adds that that she often visits their neighbours:

Yes! Many times I go and visit one, the other one will maybe come to me. So, we visit as if we are not different races. We feel fine asking each other things. (TS#35w)

They exchange gifts of food, and she also gives outgrown children's clothes to her African neighbours:

Whatever is too small for my little ones I give to them, and they would come and say thank you very much here is a bottle of coke for you, something like that. (TS#35w)

Many residents have a close relationship with at least one of their other-race neighbours. Asked if she had any African friends, a coloured woman replies:

I got, there is an old lady here but she is not here [this] morning. Sometimes I go to her and talk to her and sometimes she's got a problem and we got a problem and then we talk about it. ... Every day we speak but not this week we are not because she is not here. She's an old lady, she's 69 years old but she looks good man. Yes, this grandma is Xhosa ...

For some, an other-race neighbour is *the* neighbour to whom they feel closest, or who they rely on in times of need.

Neighbours keep an eye on each others' houses, which is especially important for those African people who return to their home villages in the Eastern Cape over Christmas or at other times. Some entrust their children to neighbours if they are going out. Neighbours borrow from each other small items such as salt, sugar, and even small sums of money to pay for (pre-paid) electricity. Such interactions seem to take place between African and coloured neighbours as often, or at least almost as often, as between same-race neighbours.

I can leave them [his children] with anyone, either white or black or muslim, around me, I can leave them there, ... I can be comfortable to leave them there. No that's one thing I can tell you about my neighbours. I can leave [my children] with [them] comfortable [if] my wife [and] I want to go ... (DL#1)

An African person says that a coloured boy stays in her house when she is away (DL#5). When there are African traditional ceremonies, coloured neighbours are also invited to attend, whilst African people say that they will accompany coloured neighbours to events like funerals.

We are always together – we are united. ... we don't even worry about living with coloured people, we take them as our people. ... things like funerals, we go with them. (DS#23)

Some coloured people tell us that African people are more friendly and neighbourly than “*our own race*”.

At the same time, neighbours are rarely anyone’s closest friends. Regardless of race, and of the racial composition of the immediate neighbourhood, residents in these mixed-race neighbourhoods tended to have close friends living further away, sometimes in the same overall neighbourhood (for example, Delft South), often further afield. This was the case also in mono-racial neighbourhoods in Cape Town where we conducted further research. Indeed, our other research into the quality of ‘community’ in different parts of Cape Town suggested that, in most neighbourhoods, the quality of community is uneven or low. Our point is not to say that relationships between neighbours of different races are exemplary, but rather that race seems much less important than we expected in shaping everyday interactions and attitudes.

The challenges of crime

In new public housing neighbourhoods of post-apartheid South Africa, people have come into contact with people of different ‘racial’ origin. Their interactions with the potential ‘other’ remain framed by notions of respectability and threat that largely cut across racial lines. Most of our interviewees associated crime with young coloured men, but even African interviewees generally distinguished between good and bad coloured people. According to an African woman:

... not all the coloureds use drugs. There is right coloureds, there is wrong coloureds, you see. Some of the coloureds use the drugs and they are silly. Some of coloureds, they don’t use the drugs. They are human beings like me, you see. (DL#2)

The persistence or worsening of crime, violence and insecurity that helps neighbours to reach across former racial divides. Many recognized that their coloured and African neighbours alike included respectable people who were the victims rather than the perpetrators of crime.

A few people suggested that racial mixing was conducive to crime. A more prevalent view seems to be that crime is ubiquitous, and no one is to be trusted. According to an African man in Delft Leiden:

I don’t trust anyone. ... I won’t leave my house alone here, because if ever I leave my house alone here, they are going to break my house. That’s what I know. ... When [I] am going to my home in [the] Eastern Cape, [I] am supposed to find someone to sleep in my house. Otherwise when I leave my house alone here, they are going to break my house ... Because there are a lot of thieves here. There are a lot of thieves here, yeah. Because we are a mix here, coloureds and blacks,

yeah ... Generally the whole of Delft is the same, it's the same. Nobody can leave the house alone here. Because when you leave the house alone here, you leave your house under risk, yeah ... People don't trust each other, people don't trust each other. (DL#2)

One enduring difference is the perception, among some coloured people, that African people are more willing to act collectively against criminals. Many coloured people say that the presence of African people makes the neighbourhood safer. “*Mostly the black people here they are standing together like as a community, they are standing together*” (DS#18). A man who used to live in the ‘coloured’ working-class neighbourhood of Bonteheuwel, where (he said) crime was out of control, talked at length of the benefits of living in a mixed neighbourhood:

Staying here in Delft, it is very nice ... The one thing that I'm very pleased with ... to live with Africans is very good. Because if you stay in a coloured community there's always bad elements is gonna come up, you see, breaking [into] the houses. Now they don't do that here because they ... are afraid. ... If they catch them, then they hit them like everything; then the people they are afraid of coming here, because they know. (DS#24)

Some other interviewees have misgivings about this willingness to employ violence against criminals (e.g. DL#3). Contrarily, one resident also said that African people are better at solving problems through discussion:

Africans are not like Coloureds. Some Coloureds, ... they are violent. When there's Africans in the community, then we can talk to one another ... and see how can we end this problem? (DS#24)

(He also thought that African people are more sociable than coloured people).

Conclusion

The study of segregation and desegregation is dominated by studies of the persistence of segregation, albeit in changing forms (for example, for the USA, Charles, 2003; Massey *et al.*, 2009; Logan and Zhang, 2010). The study of demographically integrated neighbourhoods is a relatively small (but growing) part of the broader literature (see, for example, on the USA, Ellen, 2000; Maly, 2005). In South Africa, residential desegregation has proceeded slowly, in part due to public policy on the allocation of state-subsidised housing. Furthermore, even those public spaces which appear to have desegregated turn out, on closer examination, to be characterised by continuing segregation at a micro level. Previous studies of unusual neighbourhoods suggest that demographic

desegregation was not matched by any fundamental deracialisation of everyday interactions. Studies of Delft South (Oldfield, 2000, 2004; Millstein, 2007) tend to see episodes of inter-racial cooperation as being contingent on specific, discrete stimuli. The exceptional case of Westlake Village, where there do appear to be close inter-racial interactions, is explained in terms of the strong links between and shared place attachment of coloured and African people prior to their becoming neighbours in the new public housing project. Overall, therefore, a sceptical tone has informed the literature on desegregation, especially but not only in South Africa.

Our findings are more encouraging. Coloured and African people in Delft South and Tambo Square do not have shared histories or place attachment or other ties prior to becoming neighbours in these new neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, our interviews provide plenty of evidence of increased racial toleration, reduced prejudice and race-neutral interactions. At the same time, racialised identities still matter: People see themselves and others as coloured or African (or 'Muslim', white and so on). The persistence of racialised identities does not seem to be associated with enduring racial division. Neighbours interact positively, and describe their neighbourhoods in terms of multi-cultural accommodation and toleration. Many of our interviewees appreciated their racial diversity. It is *not* clear to us, as it was to Oldfield (2004:194), that coloured and African people's lives are patterned so very differently. Perhaps the passage of time has meant that people's lives are more oriented towards neighbours (although we did find that many residents retain extra-neighbourhood links, including to kin, old friends, and churches). We did not find evidence to support Millstein's finding that there is deep inter-racial mistrust. (Perhaps her finding is linked to her focus on formal politics, which might remain more racialised, rather than everyday interactions.¹) Although Millstein argued that little had been done for residents of different races to learn about each other in Delft, our study found that residents have been learning from each other during the course of their stay as neighbours. The contact hypothesis should not be thrown out too quickly.

It is likely that inter-racial contacts are positive in these racially-mixed neighbourhoods precisely because the conditions are close to the 'optimal' ones identified in the contact hypothesis literature. Relationships are egalitarian rather than hierarchical, in that people are similarly income-poor neighbours in similarly small houses. They are not competitive, in that people are neighbours because they have already been allocated houses and receive the same, non-scarce municipal services. Contact is regular and frequent, and free from

¹ Some of our interviewees (e.g. DS#18) suggested that political leaders allocate employment opportunities on community projects to favour same-race supporters.

anxiety. Contact is also personalized in that relationships between close neighbours have real potential for change, in that strangers become acquaintances and acquaintances become friends.

Several specific features of these neighbourhoods enhance those factors that make interactions more positive. These are neighbourhoods in which almost everyone is poor. To be eligible for a state-subsidised house in any of our research sites, applicants had to have an income of less than R3,500 per month. A small number of residents had improved their standard of living since moving into the area, but most remained dependent on a mix of government grants or pensions and meagre earnings from typically irregular or casual or informal employment. Unemployment is widespread. Most interviewees insisted that they had enough to feed themselves, but most also complained about their inability to afford much more. Shared experiences of poverty seem to be a social leveller, as residents see that their neighbours share their own economic difficulties. As one resident in Delft South told us: *'Do not think that you are better than the rest, because you are not? What are you doing in Delft? If you were better, then you do not belong in Delft'* (DS#21).

Residents not only see that economic hardship respects no racial boundaries, but neighbours' responses to economic and social challenges also transcend racial lines. Among large numbers of both African and coloured people in our study sites, respectability is an important quality: Respectable people do not get drunk or abusive, attend church, and strive to keep their children under control. In mixed neighbourhoods, most residents not only see that neighbours with different 'racial' or geographical origins not only share their economic circumstances, but also strive to be respectable. Conversely, jealousy occurred within as much as, and perhaps more than, across racial boundaries, undermining the possible emergence of racially-segregated communities.

Another important leveller is the threat and reality of violent crime. For most people, certain public spaces are dangerous at all times, and after dark even the immediate neighbourhood might cease to be safe. Most residents are aware of their vulnerabilities – and of the similar vulnerabilities of their neighbours, regardless of race.

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