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Research project

Topic:

The understanding of race: An analysis of laypeople's contemporary understanding of the notion race.

University of Cape Town

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Summary of scope and aims of the project:

"In the vocabulary of laymen, the word race is a nonsense term..." Morton Fried, 1965.

This is a thesis about popular perceptions of "race" - the way in which ordinary people in South Africa conceptualise and understand the term.

Traditional academic literature on the topic has emphasised the need to differentiate clearly between "popular" and "scientific" conceptions of "race". The scientific conception, it is constantly emphasised, refers to a category based exclusively on physical, genetic, biologically inherited criteria. The popular conception, on the other hand, does not adhere to this strict formulation (Boonzaier, 1988:61).

However, little has been done to substantiate this latter claim. And while there might well be hundreds of volumes and articles which deal with "racial attitudes" and "racial behaviour", surprisingly little research has been done to determine whether the general public has any understanding of the notion race at all. And furthermore, if laypeople would have an understanding of the concept are there any grounds for assuming that this understanding makes sense?

2. Studies of "racial attitudes" and "racism" in South Africa:

A sample of literature and research on "racial attitudes" and "racism" in South Africa would include the following: MacCrone, I.D. (1937), Pettigrew, T. (1960), Hudson et al.

(1966), Van den Berghe, P.L. (1970), Edelstein, M.L. (1972), and Lever, H. (1978).

In all six studies informants belonging to a specific "group" (e.g. Whites) were asked to give their reactions, responses or attitudes towards members of other "groups" in order to enable the researchers to determine the types of "racism" or "racial attitudes" that existed between the groups concerned. It is, however, important to notice that the researchers assumed that these "groups" were "racial groups"; and furthermore, it must be realized that all "groups" were defined prior to the research, and it can thus be assumed that the informants were 'forced' to respond to predetermined "groups".

In the first three studies, the research overwhelmingly focusses on the responses of "White" informants - English-speaking South Africans, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, South African Jews, White students from the university of Natal, and white inhabitants, mainly from the Transvaal (MacCrone, 1937; Pettigrew, 1960; Hudson et al., 1966) "People, as Hudson argues, who set the values prevalent in the community" (1966:22).

The groups which were used as subjects, meaning the groups towards which the informants had to give their responses, were the following: Bantu, Indians, Coloureds, Whites, English-speaking South Africans, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, Portuguese, English Jews, urban Bantu, and rural Bantu. These so-called "racial groups", which were used to determine "racial behaviour" and "racial attitudes", are

however, nothing more than: religious groups (e.g. Jews), language groups (e.g. English-speaking South Africans), geographical groups (e.g. urban Bantu), nationalities (e.g. Portuguese), and groups as defined in the Population Registration Act (e.g. Coloureds).

In more current research, done by Van den Berghe (1970), Edelstein (1972), and Lever (1978), similar groups could also be distinguished: Durban students (Europeans, Indians, Africans, Coloureds), high school pupils from Bantu residents in Soweto, English-speaking South Africans, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, and Jewish residents from Johannesburg.

The groups used as subjects were the following: Europeans, Indians, Africans, Coloureds, Zulus, Swazis, Xhosa's, Vendas, Tswanas, Shangaans, Pedis, Southern Sotho, Afrikaners, Jews, English-speaking South Africans, British, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, Hollanders, Germans, Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese and Russians.

Like in the previous studies the "racial groups" which were described are: language groups (e.g. Afrikaans-speaking South Africans), nationalities (e.g. Germans), religious groups (e.g. Jews), ethnic groups (e.g. Zulus), and groups as defined in the Population Registration Act.

The only real difference with the previous studies is that the types of informants changed over time from only white to groups of informants comprising whites, blacks or only blacks, Indians and coloureds.

It is obvious that the research about "racism" and "race-attitudes" in South Africa, does not seem to be based on scientific determined racial groups, but instead on a mixture of different kinds of groups, based on religion, nationality, ethnicity, geography and legislation.

3. Recent debates about the nature of "racism":

In current literature we find two main opposing debates on the nature of "racism", the one supporting "racism" as a special type of discrimination and the other believing it to be a specific criteria of discrimination.

Michael Banton, a leading authority on the subject race supports the former by arguing that racism was originally a scientific doctrine which happens to have been successfully criticised and sought to explain why certain societies were more successful in achieving a high level of development than others. It was a product of a movement in biology, which has been left far behind; as a biological doctrine racism is dead (Banton, 1970:28). Consequently changes in terminology have been made at the popular level. In South Africa policies implying inequality of ethnic groups are more and more defended on political and cultural matter rather than on pseudo-biological grounds.

But if the public denies equal treatment to members of various ethnic groups by basing their argument on cultural, instead of biological variation, can we still call their views racist? Banton argues that if we should call these new culturally based doctrines "racist" we will mislead people.

To call them "racialist" is much preferable, but not the ideal solution. These new arguments can better be classified as types of ethnocentrism. For example, arguments about the immigration of Indians to Natal might in the past have been labelled as racist, based on pseudo-biological characteristics. But at present this is less likely, arguments like this are best seen as part of a wider tendency to appeal to new kinds of evidence and other sentiments so that they are more accurately designated by a non-biological adjective. However, this does not mean that the new-type ethnocentrism is better than the old-type racism (Banton, 1970:31-32).

However, this argument is not full-proof, Banton's weakness is his insistence that the term "racism" must only be applied to doctrines which explain different characteristics and capabilities in terms of biological inheritance (Banton, 1988:12). Would it not be much clearer to distinguish between biological racism and other forms in order to show their common ground? For example, a well known South African racist ideology argues that black people in this country are so far behind whites in social, cultural and psychological achievement that they have to be treated as in an "infant stage of civilization". Although this doctrine contains no biological racism, it retains a racist attitude embodied in a social theory (Cohen, 1971:104). If we should go along with Banton we should have to call this ideology "non-racist" which would cause only more sociological confusion than just to stick to the term "racist" to describe it (104).

Cohen argues, that if between various groups of people a number of coinciding criteria can be found, especially those relating to wealth, power and prestige, then members of each group will tend to emphasize these social differences. Furthermore, if there are among these characteristics several cultural and physical ones, the differentiation will be expressed in ethnic and/or racial terms. Depending on the nature and degree of interaction between the differentiated groups, a structure or situation of ethnic rivalry, antagonism, or even struggle will materialise (Cohen,1971:106). Much depends however, on several other factors in determining whether the structure will endure. For the barriers of discrimination (apartheid!) can brake down and prevent (or weaken) the consolidation of such types of structures. Whether the discriminating structure will dissolve depends mainly on two aspects: firstly, the interests of the groups concerned, the balance of power and other structural conditions and, secondly, the real and symbolic significance which can and will be attached to the difference between the groups concerned. These elements will in turn influence the perceptions of interest and possibilities of alliance, etc. Among the real differences are these of culture and physical appearance; when these interact a sense of difference is very strong, although it does not prevent physical contact. And if there is nothing that prevents sexual relations, which will eventually result in the full recognition of the off-spring, the barriers of discrimination (apartheid) will break down (Cohen,1971:107).

Once again expediency and cultural beliefs and values can determine the outcome. It must, however, be remembered that how more a structure of ethnic or racial differentiation becomes accepted, the more likely it is going to be perpetuated; consolidation occurs more likely when hierarchy and a structure of social barriers facilitating its perpetuation are significant factors of differentiation (107).

Various "race groups" in South Africa have characteristics which are only slightly different from each other, and will therefore be strongly emphasized if they symbolize the identities of each group. The question is now whether so-called real racial characteristics, such as skin colour, arouse distinctive racial antagonism, due to the primordial reaction to skin colour, or not. One hypothesis assumes that "darkness arouses irrational anxieties among white people, due to its association with dirt, and hence with anal-sadistic phantasies which are aroused and projected onto dark skinned races to whom violent attributes and/or "dirty habits" are then attributed". Another of these hypothesis asserts that a "man's skin is seen as a boundary, and thus covering his "true-self", and is therefore used to define certain lasting qualities which are attributed to him/her, or which he/she may actually possess"(107). But whatever kind of truth there is behind such hypothesis, the question arises of how relevant they are. It is well known that members of primitive societies are disgusted by the alien characteristics of neighbouring tribes who are often thought

of as lesser beings, or even less than human; and all this without benefit of visible racial differences!(107).

Might it not be that the process of categorization of people in categories is part of a wider process of construction of ideology. The categories which are created are not a direct consequence of a certain genetic or cultural heritage but are part of a cultural process of evaluation and give meaning to certain phenomena such as biological or cultural characteristics. The main characteristics which will influence (but not determine) who will be considered to belong to a race or not might be genetically determined, but that these characteristics are considered important is ideologically determined: "A dynamic cultural construction which is part of wider political and economic processes" (Cowlshaw, 1987:228).

Indeed, at the popular level, most people are capable of ethnic prejudice, hostility, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, rivalry or open war, without benefit of ideas about racial differences. But when these ideas filter through the society, they help to structure perceptions in such a way as to construct favourable stereotypes of ethnic strangers less likely. Once this happens it is always within the bounds of human ingenuity to construct or create ethnic categories to galvanize and mobilize political feelings, and act in favour of a national movement, and against the dangerous "symbol of impurity" which could endanger it beyond recovery. The "real" racial characteristics between the different groups will therefore have to be made obvious,

and for this purpose anything goes; from apartheid to a yellow badge (Cohen,1971:107).

4. Summary of research, data and resources:

In this project I will analyse the popular perceptions of "race" in order to determine various questions concerning laypeoples' understanding of the term.

The first objective of the research was than also to obtain a better understanding of people's contemporary perceptions of the term race. In view of the size and diversity of the population it was decided not to rely solely on the normal anthropological fieldwork technique of mainly informal participant observation. But instead I used data collected by first year anthropology students, which was used by them in an essay titled: "A question of race". As part of their work each student interviewed three members of the public in order to find out: 1) how people define the term race, 2) between how many "races" they distinguish in South Africa, and 3) wether certain human characteristics and abilities are related to "race". Inspired by this I drew up a data-sheet with similar questions (see appendix A). The questions asked were non-contentious and were mainly used to provide basic statistics. The use of the data-sheets ensured that information was obtained from a cross-section of the population.

The second objective of the research was to find data which could show how scientists and laypeople respectively, have used and understood the term "race", and how these

perceptions have changed over time. In order to obtain this information I conducted a literature research, making use of various libraries and newspaper archives, in which voluminous existing literature, such as published books, articles, school-textbooks and newspapers were consulted.

The third objective was to highlight any differences in the perceptions of my informants understanding of the notion race. The fieldwork was done in Cape Town, with the more intensive fieldwork carried out between April and June 1989. Due to the enormous diversity of people it was necessary to interview a wide variety of informants. These included people from different Population groups, education-levels, sex and age.

Initial suspicion was expected from the informants and a fair amount of time was therefore spent in getting myself known in Cape Town. I made several contacts with students and various other people, mainly by participating in social activities and conversations. This helped me to widen my network of friends and at the same time to obtain a better acceptance in the community. In this way the initial suspicions were allayed and I was able to visit several families and students for interviews. All interviews were conducted in English. Contact with non-whites (Africans, Asians, Coloureds) was more difficult (due to a lack of personal contacts), but again was managed with the help of student friends. My purpose was explained and as a result very few people were unwilling to take part in the interviews. The questions that were asked during the

interviewing slightly changed in accordance with the flow of the interview. Despite the problems of suspicion, several good informants were found from all sections of the population, and these were informally and sometimes repeatedly interviewed.

5. Chapter outline:

Chapter two seeks to trace the origins, use and understanding of the term "race". Particular attention will be paid to the change and use of the notion race on the international as well as South African scene. Focussing specifically on the use of it in the 'scientific' and academic world. Furthermore, the analysis of newspaper reports, schooltextbooks, historical works and various aspects of the legislation will be used to throw light on people's understanding of the "race" concept in South Africa.

On the basis of this chapter the project addresses itself, in chapter three, to the contemporary understanding and use of the term race by the general public. Use is made of data obtained from data-sheets, as well as various personal interviews. It also considers the extent to which the public misunderstands and confuses the term "race" with various other terms and concepts. And it will furthermore also highlight the changes that have taken place in people's understanding and use , as well as the total confusion and disagreement about the meaning of the notion "race".

Chapter 2: The changing use of the notion "race".

1. The international use of the notion "race" :

i. History of the term "race":

The word "race" has an uncertain origin. Most scholars have attempted to associate it with, the Czech *ràz* ("stamp", "impression"), the Arabic *ras* ("head", "foundation"), or the Latin *radix* ("stamp", "impression"), but not one of them can be accepted. The most likely suggestion is that it derives from *ratio*, which means "mode", "quality", "nature", and in which sense it was used by classical Roman authors like Varro, Cicero and Ceasar (Chambers Encyclopedia, 1967:418). In spite of this the form *razza* was used in the fourteenth century in Italy. By the fifteenth century it was also found in Middle French as *race* (the earlier form was *rasse*). At approximately the same time it occurred as *raza* in Spanish and as *raça* in Portuguese, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century it was in use in the present-day English (Oxford Dictionary, 1989).

The first time the word *race* appeared in the English language was in the poem, The dance of the seven deadly sins (1508) by the Scotsman William Dunbar. Among them who followed envy he listed:

"And flatteris in to menis facis;
And bakbyttaris of sindry racis,
To ley that had delyte;"

During the next two and a half to three centuries it was used more and more in a literary sense as meaning a class of people. The first time the term was used as a basis to classify people was in an essay by the French traveller and

physician Francois Bernier (1684). He writes about "four or five species or races of men in particular whose difference is so remarkable that it may properly be made use of as the foundation for a new division of the earth". He used the outward features of skin colour, hair, and physiognomy as the criteria for his classification. Bernier did, however, not come to any conclusions as to the nature of man or of the various races (Banton, 1967:16).

By the seventeenth century the phrase espèces-ou-races d'homme was widely used in reference to family or "breed". It was Leibnitz who introduced the word rasse into the German language around 1700, but at the time it meant something equivalent to what we would now call "generation". The term race has also been used in classificatory biology together with terms such as genus and species, but the problem started when it was used to name a group within a species, like "races of man". This derived from the old meaning of "blood" or "stock", which has been extended from traceable specific offspring to a much wider social, cultural and national group. It was also influenced by physical anthropology which created broad differential groups in the human population. For example, Blumenbach's classification of mankind into: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malayan (1787). These scientific works became confused in the nineteenth century with new social and political ideas as well as prejudice. For example, Gobineau's essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines (1853-1855) which suggested the existence of an "Aryan race". (Aryan, meaning noble, was used in the nineteenth

century to describe the Indo-European "family" of languages). The change from a linguistic to a physical (racial) group was very confusing when it was used combined with ideas of pure stock, superiority of the "Nordic strain" within this, and the idea of innate racial differences.

Another important influence came from the ideas of evolution, such as "survival of the fittest" and the competitive struggle for existence. In relation to race it was most influential in eugenics which promoted ideas such as the production of fine offspring, clan and racial superiority, heredity of pure stocks, and the inheritance through blood or race of culturally acquired characteristics (Williams, 1984:249). The concept of inherent racial superiority became connected to ideas of political domination, especially Imperialism. Racialism came into the English language in the twentieth century, and racialist appeared in 1930. All of these terms were hostile words which described the opinion and actions of the supporters of racial superiority or discrimination. The vagueness of race in its modern social and political meaning is one of the reasons for its loose and damaging influence. Physical, cultural, and socio-economic differences are adopted, projected and generalized, and so confused that different types of variation are made to stand for, or imply each other. The prejudice and cruelty that often follows is evil and has complicated the language which is used to recognise the diversity of mankind and its actual communities (Williams, 1984:248-250).

ii. Science:

Mainly due to this loose and damaging influence of the "race" concept, the claim is often made that most scholars distinguish between the 'popular' and 'scientific' conceptions of the term "race". This assumption is incorporated in the common distinction between "race" and "racism". It is believed that when scientists use the term "race" they refer to the objective concept of "race", but when the general public uses the term they indulge in "racism". It is also accepted that physical scientists study "race", and social scientists study the social phenomenon of "racism"; for scientists the concept "race" refers exclusively to racial criteria, while the general public confuses "race" with cultural, mental, or physical criteria, or a combination of these. Unfortunately, the facts do not adhere to these clear and consistent distinctions (Boonzaier, 1988:61).

Carl Linnés, one of the first scholars to apply the term "race" to classify subdivisions of the human population did not base his classification exclusively on physical characteristics (1758). In fact Linnés was so far from accepting the equality of men that he classified the mental qualities of each "race" as distinguishing characters which were comparable with the physical ones (Baker, 1974:61). He divided mankind into four races: Europeans, Asiatics, Afer and American. The traits of the group he named Europeans were identified as "active, very acute, a discoverer"; these of the Afer (African) were "crafty, lazy, and careless"; and those of the aboriginal American "persevering, free, and

content". Buffon (1749), on the other hand, saw climate and diet as the main causes of racial variation. He assumed that, after several generations, in one and the same environment, men "would look alike even if they had come from from very distant and different countries and if, primitively, they had been very dissimilar" (Harris,1968:265).

Most other scholars of the eighteenth century were of the opinion that racial differences were evanescent and subject to the control of natural and cultural aspects of the environment. In the nineeenth century we got a similar penomenon, with evolutionists like Darwin, Wallace and Huxley, as well as every major social scholar from Marx to Morgan believing that racial differences were essential in the understanding of human behaviour (Harris,1969:265). It was only in the twentieth century that scholars started to belief that it was possible to classify humans exclusively on physical characteristics. But although the physical and mental or cultural criteria were seperated at the conceptual level, several scholars still mixed them together when applying "race" to actual populations (Boonzaier,1988:61).

To demonstrate this the disseminated and influential work of G. Seligman's Races of Africa (first published in 1930, but revised and reprinted several times during the next three decades) will be used. For Seligman it was "obvious that questions of race should first and last be determined by the study of physical characters". But at the same time he also

assumed that cultural and linguistic research would help to refine the classification of Africa's constituent races, since these qualities were believed to affect the physiological differences between the different races" (Dubow, 1989:5). He writes, "We do possess excellent monographs dealing with particular peoples, and with each of these as nucleus of its own region it is sometimes possible to work out a reasonable scheme for certain areas" (Seligman, 1961:1). As a second alternative he made use of language, and although he admits that they are not a "safe guide" to determine the different "races", he says: "...it is so much easier to acquire a working knowledge of a language than of any other part of man's cultural make-up that names based on linguistic criteria are constantly applied to large groups of mankind and, indeed, if intelligently used, often fit quite well" (1961:1).

It is clear that Seligman makes use of several non-racial criteria to classify the different "races" of Africa: first of all, he makes use of language groups, such as Bantu, to describe racial groups: "...in this volume linguistic criteria will play a considerable part in the some what mixed classification adopted". Secondly, Seligman uses physical criteria, such as , skin colour, hair form, stature, etc. together with various languages (e.g. Hamitic, Semetic, Negro); thirdly, he sees peoples' level of civilization as another means to distinguish between different "races": "The distribution of domestic animals, and therefore the mode of life, and the politico-economic system can also be correlated with the type of country...In

conformity with this point of view...we should first describe Negrillos and Bushmen - the most technologically retarded of Africans - the Negroes and Hamites, and after them such peoples as the Hottentots, Bantu, etc., who have arisen by mixture of these races" (1961:8-10). Finally, Seligman also admits that the systems of classification used are not very accurate and he uses words such as "sometimes", "reasonably well", and "certain areas" to describe it. When suggesting the use of cultural monographs:"...it is sometimes possible to work out a reasonable scheme for certain areas", and similarly, in mentioning languages as classification method, he writes: "...language...helpful as it may be, is itself not a safe guide to race"; and when talking about his own race classification, he says: "...in the some what mixed up classification adopted" (1961:1).

More significant however, was the enormous 'scientific' effort by scholars to show that although mental characteristics were conceptually distinct from the physical ones, there existed indeed a causal relationship between them. For example, craniometry (the measurement of skulls) as well as eugenics (the regulation of 'breeding in human populations to promote specific traits) were based on the belief that mental traits are inherited. Furthermore, intelligence tests 'measured' the innate mental ability, which lent a new dimension to the argument that certain races were inferior to others (Boonzaier,1988:62).

"In the 1950's a major change in the scientific publications on race occurred. In the aftermath of the era of colonisation and especially due to the result of

Hitlers' applied eugenics, most scientists changed their views on race. Science was going to reveal the truth which would in the end do away with the myths and fallacies associated with the use and abuse of the term "race" by the general public. This was made clear in a UNESCO report:

"The ideological fact of race and the myth of 'race' should be distinguished. For all social purposes "race" is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth of "race" has created an enormous amount of human and social damages. In recent years it has taken a heavy toll in human lives and caused untold suffering. It still prevents the normal development of millions of human beings and deprives civilisation of the effective co-operation of productive minds" (Cited in Kuper, 1975:345).

Most introductory texts on the concept "race", mirror the same motives and follow all a similar format. These works normally start off with a section on the scientific concept of "race", and end by stating that these 'facts' are not adhered to by laypeople, and that they continue to be guilty of racial prejudice or racism (Boonzaier, 1988:62). The 'scientific facts' presented generally address three questions: 1) what is race, 2) are there pure races, and 3) are some races superior to others.

* Firstly, it is pointed out that the scientific concept of "race" refers only to physical characteristics, such as: head shape, nasal structure, skin colour, hair texture, and blood group. The point that is stressed is that these traits exclude social or cultural characteristics. In other words races cannot be classified on the basis of religion, nationality, culture or language, which makes it consequently, wrong to speak of a "South African race",

"Afrikaner race", "the White race", or the "coloured race".

Kuper (1984) writes:

"...the Jews who were persecuted as a "racial" group by the nazis are not a race at all, though Central European Jews might be said to have formed an "ethnic minority" since they were often identifiable and self-consciously distinct, despite a high measure of cultural assimilation" (Kuper,1984:17).

* The second point which is made is that race does not refer to mental characteristics, such as personality or intelligence. These and similar criteria can definitely not be used to classify races; furthermore, it is scientifically not as yet demonstrated that certain races are innately associated with specific personality types or levels of intelligence. The validity of intelligence test to measure the innate mental ability are also questioned because they are biased at the expense of certain populations and its also impossible to seperate the innate from the acquired component of intelligence. Tobias (1961):

"Despite this, there are still some who maintain that race determines all social and mental activities and therefore culture and civilisation generally. This view had its origin in the days of slavery when slave owners answered those whom wished to abolish slavery by suggesting that slaves were ignorant and illiterate because of their race.(and not because they were denied schooling facilities)" (1961:9).

* A last point which is generally made in these publications is that race is a statistical aggregate. In other words, a "race" is defined as a population which is seperated from the populations by the frequency with which certain physical characteristics occur. Kuper (1984) mentions the following:

"Physical differences obviously do exist between races. Taking blood groupings as an example we know that A2 - a subdivision of A - and B are practically absent among American Indians, and that in Europe, there is a low-to-moderate frequency of B, while A2

is common. In Asia, A2 is relatively rare, while the incidence of B is high" (1984:7).

These powerful arguments were rapidly accepted by the majority of scientists and intellectuals in Europe and North America, and even physical anthropologists accepted that few concepts in modern times were so badly understood and misused than the concept race when applied to man, that by the late 1970's they were critically re-examining the concept race.

iii. Physical anthropology textbooks:

For many years the prevailing view in physical anthropology was that the concept race was a valid tool to describe and study the enormous variety of human beings. However, since the 1950's the race concept has been under attack as invalid due to its incapability to show clearly that: different human populations, each with their own significant reproduction and/or physical traits, exists; as well as to its unusefulness in research; its obscuring of the understanding of human variation; and its harmful social consequences (Littlefield et al., 1982:641).

The earliest significant challenge to the race concept in American physical anthropology came from Ashley Montagu's Man's most dangerous myth: The fallacy of race (1942).

Montagu waged the battle almost single handed until the late 1960's when several works appeared, criticizing the prevailing racial analysis. It was, however, only by the end of the 1970's that the no-race approach filtered through in the academic world, and appeared as the model position in

textbooks of physical anthropology (1982:641). The change in textbook treatment of the concept race has been dramatic and relatively swift. The following study, of American anthropology textbooks, examines this change and some of the processes involved. (Note: Based on the study by Littlefield et al., 1982).

Seventeen textbooks were used in the study, selected according to several criteria. Each book was 1) a comprehensive introductory textbook which might be used for undergraduate courses in physical anthropology in South Africa, 2) devoted primarily to physical anthropology, 3) not an anthology, and 4) was published in the United States.

The sections in the textbooks dealing with human variety were read and classified in the following categories: 1) race exists (author uses race concept in describing human variety), 2) race does not exist (author rejects race concept), 3) author is non-committal (discusses the concept but comes to no conclusion), and 4) no mention of race.

Ten books included in the study were published between 1938 and 1969. Out of these, five expressed the opinion that race exists; two rejected it, while in one case it was difficult to determine what the authors' viewpoint was. Only in two cases the race concept was not mentioned. It is clear that in this sample the majority of physical anthropologists were of the opinion that the race concept was a useful tool to study and describe the human variety. The textbook-field was during this period dominated by E.A. Hooton, W. Howells and A. Montagu (the only one to reject the race concept).

Between all three of them they published nearly all textbooks before 1960 (1982:642).

After 1970 a drastic change has taken place, out of 8 textbooks published between 1971 and 1981, two texts supported the race concept, while 3 rejected it. A significant development of this period is the greater amount of authors who are non-committal(2) or do not mention race(1). When a text was classified as non-committal the authors normally presented both sides of the debate without taking a clear position. When these are added to the no-race position, 2/3 of the writers supported the no-race stand. This indicates a definite decline in the support for racial classification. The question is now why the support for the race concept declined and why did the textbook treatment of race change so dramatically in the 1970's? Littlefield et al. argue that the race concept has been influenced by changes in science as well as in its institutional relations to the larger society.

* Science is a self-correcting discipline because scientists subject their propositions to confirmation through empirical testing. It is assumed that the gradual accumulation of evidence from empirical research will lead to the rejection of inaccurate conceptions and theories and will in the end create better ones. It could thus be argued that anthropological conceptions of human variation has been changed by more expanding knowledge. The gathering of new kinds of data and, increasingly, the lack of concordance of the emerging trait distributions with existing racial

typologies have led scholars and others to new insides. Its demise, some might argue, was the result of the gradual diffusion into anthropology of advances in genetics, in biological science, and in computer technology; in other words as science progresses it will correct itself (1982:644).

Although this process has a potential influence it does not explain why the race concept was so popular in anthropology in the first place or why it responded so slowly to criticism. One of the possibilities is the change in the political climate. For example, it was only in the 1960's that the no-race position in the U.S.A. gained currency, the civil rights struggle intensified and the U.S.A. became more and more involved in an unpopular colonial war. Although, scientifically valid criticisms of typologies and of the race concept itself were not entirely new, they did only become widely accepted within anthropology until a more favourable political climate had developed (644).

* A second major influence was the changes that occurred in the context of particular institutions. During the early years of American Anthropology, Harvard and Columbia were the major institutions which influenced anthropological views of race. Most of the early works, both in physical anthropology and in general anthropology, were then also written by scholars of one of these two institutions. Harvard's influence on the race concept derived from E.A. Hooton and several other physical anthropologists who were trained there, such as C. Coon, S. Garn, and J.B. Birdsell.

Although they did not agree with their mentor's approach to racial classification on the basis of non-adaptive traits, they did not reject the race concept itself.

The second major institution where the foundations for the non-race position were developed. Franz Boas headed the department and was a major influence on the earlier scientific debates on race; he did, however, not reject the race classification. It was one of his students, Ashley Montagu, who was the first to deny the existence of the race concept totally (1982:645). In Man's most dangerous myth: The fallacy of race he wrote:

"The process of averaging the characters of a given group, of knocking the individuals together, giving them a good stirring, and then serving the resulting omelette as a "race" is essentially the anthropological process of race-making. It may be good cooking but it is not science...The omelette called race has no existence outside the statistical frying pan in which it has been reduced by the heat of the anthropological imagination".

* The third and most important influence was the small concentration of graduate training in anthropology during the 1960's. Prior to 1950, there were only eleven Ph.D.-granting departments in anthropology in the U.S.A. By 1960 this number had increased to a mere 20, and out of these, 8 departments ranked among the most elite (e.g. Columbia, Harvard and Chicago). These institutions, consequently, produced the majority of textbook authors. These figures show how elite the nature of anthropology was in the period before 1960. Not only was graduate training concentrated in a few institutions, courses in anthropology were only available to a very few undergraduates. The result was that both the producers and the consumers of anthropological

knowledge were concentrated in the most prestigious academic institutions, at levels of advanced studies. Although anthropology was committed to the study of human diversity, most of its practitioners were homogenous in terms of class origins and social background. Few women or individuals belonging to a minority group were represented in the profession, and fewer specialized in physical anthropology. It is thus not surprising that physical anthropologists adhered to a race-existence position; most of them received their training in these institutions.

After 1960 the position changed quite dramatically, and by 1975 there were 80 Ph.D. granting departments of anthropology in the United States. Anthropology has been a standard part of the curriculum in the majority of undergraduate institutions and is taught in several colleges and schools. The consequences of this dramatic change were firstly, the enormous expansion in the numbers of anthropology students and consequently the textbook market, and secondly, people of more diverse social backgrounds gained entry to the profession (645).

It is however, not only important to consider who produced the textbook, but also who consumed them. A large amount of the academics currently teaching anthropology received their training at non-elite institutions in programs that did not exist twenty years ago. They also overwhelmingly land up in non-elite teaching positions.

Results from a study into the views on human variation of physical anthropologists in Ph.D. granting departments,

B.A.- and M.A.-granting departments as well as colleges, found that 47 per cent out of 379 academics were in favour of the no-race position. However, the propositions varied considerably depending on the type of institution: 32 per cent at Ph.D. granting universities, 48 per cent at B.A.- and M.A.-granting institutions, and 55 per cent at two-year colleges (Littlefield et al., 1982:646).

From this it is clear that there is a widespread support for the race position but it also shows that institutions with the largest numbers of undergraduates are more often staffed by physical anthropologists who are in favour of a no-race position. At the same time, however, it is evident that the academics who control the professional training in physical anthropology support a race-position (646).

The rapid expansion of anthropology and the changes in the characteristics of its practitioners have contributed to the decline of the race concept in physical anthropology textbooks. And although these texts are still most often written by graduates of elite institutions, they are directed towards a market that is largely made up of students attending non-elite institutions. Anthropologists who teach in such institutions and whose social origins are relatively less privileged, tend to be more receptive to the no-race position than their colleagues in the elite institutions. It can be concluded that the rapid expansion of anthropology and of higher education in general during the 1960's and 1970's has played a huge role in the increased incidence of the no-race view in physical anthropology textbooks (Littlefield et al., 1982:647).

2. The use of the notion "race" in South Africa:

i. The South African scholar G.M.Theal:

The "racial history" of Southern Africa was the subject of considerable contention. A heated debate which began well back into the nineteenth century discussed the origins of the Bushmen in terms of their assumed affinities with Mongolian, Central Asian and Australian races. It was the historian George McCall Theal who was a major influence in establishing the idea that the Bushmen were South Africa's aborigines, and that they were afterwards followed by Hottentots and Bantu migrations from the north and finally displaced by white settlement from the South. This sequence of occupation constituted an important factor in the argument that white colonists who had moved into the land from the Cape came in contact with Southern migrations of Bantu - thus establishing and sustain the convenient notion that Whites had as much right to South Africa as blacks. The fact that this historical sequence reflected an assumed racial hierarchy (made up of Bantu, Hottentots, Bantu and Whites) helped to reinforce the idea that white supremacy was the natural route of a logical historical process in which the survival of the fittest was accepted to prevail (The only event which disturbed this sequence was the evidence of a higher civilization which left its mark in stone working, gold mining, etc. It is here that the Great Zimbabwe myth comes into play).

In his book South Africa (1894), Theal describes the existence of different unassimilable South African "races",

namely the Bushmen, Hottentots, Bantu and European. Each of these so-called "races" is described by Theal as having own distinctive physical, cultural and mental characteristics.

The Bushmen were described as follows:

"The Aborigines of South Africa were savages of very low type. They were pigmies in size, yellowish-brown in colour, hollow backed and with wrinckles. On their hands were rows of little tufts of wiry hair, hardly larger than peppercorns, and leaving the greater portion of the surface bald. Their faces were broad in a line with the eyes, their cheeks were hollow and they had flat noses, thick lips, and receding chins...the clothing of the males was the skin of an animal...To the eye of the European no people in any part of the world were more unattractive...The Bushmen had no domestic animal but the dog, and they made no effort to cultivate the soil. They lived by the chase and upon wild plants, honey, locusts,...So weak in frame as to be incapable of toil, they possessed great keenness of vision for detecting objects at a distance, and marvellous fleetness of foot and power of endurance in the chase. Their weapon of offence was a feeble bow, but the arrow-head was coated with poison so deadly that the slightest wound was mortal" (1894:1-2).

The main features of the Hottentots were given as:

"...frame slight but sometimes tall, better formed than Bushman, but back hollow, head scantily covered with little tufts of short crisped hair, cheeks hollow, nose flat, eyes far apart and often to appearance set obliquely, hands and feet small, colour yellow to olive; weapons assagai, knobkerrie, bow and poisoned arrow, shield; pursuits pastoral and to a very limited extent metallurgies; government feeble; habitations slender frames of wood covered with skins or reed mats; domestic animals ox, sheep, and dog; demeanor unconstant, marked by levity; language abounding in clicks"(1902:8).

And similarly the Bantu's features were given as follows:

"...frame of those on the coast generally robust and as well formed as that of Europeans, of those in the interior somewhat weaker, head covered closely with crispy hair, cheeks full, nose usually flat...; weapons assagai, knobkerrie, shield and among the Northern tribes battle-axe and bow and arrow; pursuits agricultural, pastoral and metallurgie; government firmly constituted with perfect systems of laws; habitations strong framework of wood covered with thatch...; language musical,...inflected to produce harmony in sound"(1902:8-9).

It is clear that Theal saw innate mental characteristics as a link between race and culture, and this is even more emphasised when he wrote: "The greatest difference between the divisions of people who lived in South Africa...are now believed to be in the constitution of their minds..."(1902:7). By the 1880's it was generally accepted that the cranial or cephalic index (ratio between the breadth to the length of the head or skull) were the most important in classifying the racial types:

"The skull measurements show great difference in the three races...What is termed the horizontal cephalic index, that is the proportion of the breadth of a skull to its length...Bantu's are dolichocephalic, that is people whose skull averages in breadth less than three-fourth of their length. The average horizontal cephalic index of white people is 78.7 Of Hottentots the average cephalic index is 72.3...Of Bushmen...the average horizontal cephalic index is 76.6..."

"The cranial capacity, or size of the brain of each is given by Professor Flower as: Bantu 1485, Hottentot 1407, and Bushman 1288 cubic centimeters. The average brain of a European is 1497 cubic centimeters in size (1906:7)". He was therefore able to rank the four races on a scale from 'barbarism' to 'civilization' freely commenting on the innate potential of each:

"These nearly naked people ("Hottentots"), living in idleness and filthiness, indescribable, were yet capable of improvement. During the last century a vast amount of missionary labour has been concentrated upon the natives of South Africa, and though to the present day there is not a single instance of a Bushman of pure blood having permanently adopted European habits, the Hottentots have done so to a considerable extent. They have not indeed shown a capacity to rise to the highest level of civilized life, but they reached a stage much above that of barbarism.

...(the Bantu) were certainly of mixed blood...proof of a mixed ancestry of every unequal capability is

afforded by the fact that most of these people seem unable to rise up to the European level of civilization, though not a few individuals have shown themselves possessed of a mental power equal to that of the white men" (1894:4-5).

Theal insisted that the various races constituted distinct and separate categories even though he was aware that at least the "Bushmen" and the "Bantu" did not originate from pure "stock" or "blood". For example, he discusses several physical differences between "Hottentots" and "Bantu", but at the same time he acknowledges several factors of resemblance and points out that "all of this seems to point to the supposition that at a time now far in the past an intruding body of males of some unknown race took to themselves consorts of Bushmen blood, and from that union sprang the Hottentot tribes of Southern Africa" (1894:4). "Most probably these people had their origin in a mixture of men of light-coloured hamitic blood with women of Bushmen stock. The Hottentots frequently captured and detained Bushmen girls, so that there were many points of resemblance between the two peoples as well as great differences. Their languages varied widely in construction, though both abounded in clicks. Most of the Bushmen were monogamists, the Hottentot customs admitted of polygamy...Their skull measurements do not correspond. The head of the Hottentot is longer and narrower than that of the Bushman, and his face is more prognathous. The lower jaw of the Bushman is only surpassed in feebleness by that of the Australian black, while that of the Hottentot, though far from massive is much better developed. The Bushman ear is without a lobe, which the hottentot ear possesses, and the cranial capacity of the

Hottentot is higher" (2-3). " On the other hand, against these differences several points of resemblance can be placed. The colour of the skin is the same, and the little balls of wiry hair with open space between them are in general common to both, though sometimes the head of the Hottentot is more tickly covered. The one has small hands and feet, and so has the other. Their power of imagination is similar, and differs greatly from that of other Africans"(3).

Nonetheless, although the "Hottentots" were not originally of "pure stock", this did not detract from his premise that the contemporary "Hottentots" in South Africa were quite distinct from the "Bushmen". Some have supposed that they ("Hottentots") sprang originally from Bushmen stock; other that the Bushmen were simply Hottentots who became degraded by the loss of their domestic cattle. However, neither of these theories is tenable (1894:3). Similarly, another branch of the human family, the Bantu, were recognised as "certainly of mixed stock" and of "mixed ancestry", but still constituted a distinct category with clearly identifiable physical features (1902:8).

Theal's writing was typical of South African social thought and literature of the era before the Second World War, and the same basic set of assumptions and premises about race could be found in local newspapers, in school textbooks, and in popular thinking. This thinking was thus not just confined to South Africa, but was prevalent throughout

Europe, its colonial empires and North America
(Boonzaier, 1988:61).

ii. The use of the notion "race" in schooltextbooks:

In an attempt to determine how the general public conceptualised and understood the "race groups" in the past, several schooltextbooks were analysed. Sections dealing with especially the population of South Africa were carefully read and compared with each other to determine if any changes occurred. Eight history and geography textbooks were used, these texts will portray the perceptions of the general public. The work covered the periods between 1916 to 1989.

In a textbook of 1916, various "groups", such as, ethnic groups and nations were believed to constitute different "race groups". For example:

"There are in the Cape Province 2.563.024 persons of different race...There are...of European descent...Dutch,...French,...English,...Germans. There are natives, consisting of Bushmen, Hottentots, Kaffirs and Malays"(Whiteside, 1916:18).

Later in 1919, Cooper writes about the rise of a new "race", the Coloureds: "By intermarriage between the white and coloured races, a great number of people of mixed race came into existence in the Colony."

In many of the publications it is also obvious that physical, cultural and innate capabilities are constantly mixed up:

"Jan van Riebeeck...was small of stature, yet of resolute character, of great energy and untiming industry...The Hottentots were a pastoral race...hence they roamed the country, according to the season in search of good pasturage...as to their general habits, they were incurably lazy, had a bent for stealing, and were on the whole not a warlike

people. The only other natives with whom the company came into contact at the cape up to 1770 were the Bushmen...They proved a nuisance to the Hottentots and especially to the Europeans as they could not adapt themselves to civilized ways" (Fowler and Smit, 1932:205-206).

Another phenomenon is the distinctions which are made between the cultures of the Hottentots and Bushmen, as if culture is fixed and unchanging.

"In 1652 when South Africa first opened her arms, and welcomed Europeans into her sunny climate there were already two native races, the Bushmen and Hottentots. From the point of physique and colour, it was not easy to distinguish the one from the other, but in customs, culture and occupation they were poles apart" (Lindeque, 1941:148).

In the 1950's and 60's descriptions of "racial groups" with innate differences continues:

"The Bushmen were smaller than the Hottentots and were even lower in intelligence. They had no herds or flocks and lived by hunting with poisoned arrows. They were quite incapable of adapting themselves to new conditions and regarded all men as enemies and all animals as their lawful prey. They lived in small family groups...and by black and white alike were looked upon...to be killed on sight" (Dodd et al., 1950:237).

In several geography textbooks (note: not in history books) the authors do not specifically mention "races" any longer, but instead talk about "groups", and distinguish between them by mentioning the group members' so-called innate capabilities and occupations. For example:

"...our population consists of four different groups Whites and Bantu...Asiatics...and Coloureds...They (Coloureds) have lively temperament and love singing. Coloured men are often good builders, carpenters, bricklayers and plumbers...Most Indians are either shopkeepers, professional people or small holders. They are industrious people...many shopkeepers and professionals are very wealthy" (Beyers, 1968).

During the 1980's the mentioning of specific "race groups" started disappearing, but naturally mention is still made of Whites, Blacks, non-Whites, etc. Graves et al.(1985), write:

"The white emigrants were anxious to establish...In some instances, treaties were negotiated, although the concept of land ownership was alien to black pastoralists" (141).

Furthermore, it can be noticed that the context of history textbooks has changed dramatically during this period. More attention is given to politico-economic happenings, instead of concentrating on the various "race groups". Only brief mention is made of the various "groups" as found in the legislation. For example:

"He had (General Botha) to convince those of English origin that...He had to reassure those of Boer origin that his first loyalty was to the new South Africa...He faced political resistance from those excluded from the franchise and affected by the Convention's decisions - the blacks, coloureds and Indians" (Graves et al., 1989:435).

iii. The use of the term "race" in newspapers:

All together 8 copies of the Argus newspaper were used, covering the years 1928, 1938, 1958, 1967, and 1988. Out of these newspapers 20 articles reporting on motor-car accidents, fatal injuries and courthearings were chosen. These reports were specifically picked out because its content clearly reflected how members of the general public described the different "race groups" as conceptualized by them during that era. The objective of the exercise was to determine what kind of "race groups" were distinguished, and how they were described by the laymen, and secondly, whether any changes have taken place in this conceptualization of the various "race groups" between 1928 and 1988. The following information was obtained from the sample:

In newspapers from 1928, reference is made to three "race groups", the "Europeans", "natives" and "coloured people".

"John Thomas van der Merwe, a European farmer, aged 35, was to-day sentenced to death..." (Cited in the Argus, 28 November, 1928). "A native gave evidence against his son, who was sentenced four and a half years...", "...(she) gave evidence against a 28-year-old coloured man, Ben Mayson..." (Cited in the Argus, 29 November, 1928).

In these publications it is evident that where people from European descent are discussed the word European is used to indicate this; in cases where the European is dropped, the 'European sounding' name and/or residence of the person concerned is given. For example:

"A Sea Point woman, Mrs. Hodgson...gave evidence..." (Cited in the Argus, 28 November, 1928). For the other two "groups" the word coloured or native is always mentioned together with the persons' name. For example: "native, James Naku, escaped yesterday from a gang of convicts working at one..." (Cited in the Argus, 28 November, 1928).

Furthermore, in cases where the "coloured" and "native" had "European sounding" names, than this was also stated. Very often the type of work done by the person is also mentioned.

For example:

"A coloured man, given the name of Johan Manasse,..."; "...the lorry was driven by a Mr. Voight, with whom was a man named Hollander" (Cited in the Argus, 28 November, 1928).

In publications from 1938 the same distinction is made. For example:

"In 1936 there were 636.159 persons of all races convicted, and of these 16 percent were Europeans"; "Convictions of males of each race for drunkenness for the two years were: European..., native..., and coloured"; "A native labourer, Zitvela Matonzi, was sentenced to receive seven strokes with a cane by Mr. T.J. Conway..."; "Daniel Brink, a farmer of Wellington, was yesterday fined...for injuring three coloured men..." (Cited in the Argus, 17 December, 1938).

After the introduction of the Population Registration Act in 1950, a change occurred in peoples' description of "race groups" as found in South Africa. Due to its official status the various "race groups" were written with capital letters, but apart from that not much changed at first. For example:

"Abraham Hercules Swart (45), a European of Wetton"; "Mr. F. McMillan of Glenriff Road., Three Anchor Bay, was robbed when two Coloured men stopped him and demanded his money..."; "A Native was struck dead by lightning while herding cattle in a field..." (17 December, 1958).

In 1967 reports the following groups could be distinguished: Coloureds, Natives and Whites. The word European has been changed with the word White, although it was used when actual European foreigners were discussed. While the term "non-White" is also used to describe "Coloureds" and "Natives":

"A European woman, Miss. Margaret Landau (French),...she said she had been stabbed by a Native man" (Cited in the Argus, 23 December); "A 29-year-old Coloured man, Mr. Lionel Roberts of Reef Road, Vanguard Estate, Athlone, drowned..."; "He is alleged to have assaulted a 18-year-old White girl..." (Cited in the Argus, 26 December, 1967).

Newspapers from 1988, reflect yet another change in peoples' description of South Africa's race groups. "Blacks", "Whites" and "Coloureds" were the three new "race groups" which appeared in newspaper articles; in accordance with the "groups" described in the Population Registration Act. "Blacks can from tomorrow obtain full leasehold rights on their houses and property"; "A Coloured member of the Presidents Council was ordered off a Whites-only beach..." (Cited in the Argus, 6 January, 1988).

However, the above groups are not mentioned very regularly, and most of the time the residence and the name of the person concerned is given. For example:

"The dead body of the soldier, Armand Ndzinandze, was..."; "The dead Mr. David Martin, 30, was fatally injured..."; "Police said Mr. Edwin Jacobs, 30, of Paarl East, died..."; "A four-month-old girl drowned...she was Khayakazi Mtw..."; "The driver of the car was Mr. Nazeen Karrien, 28, of Bango Crescent Atlantis" (Cited in the Argus, 4 January, 1988).

Over a period of 60 years the South African public has distinguished between various "groups" in their society, which are believed, by the majority of people, to be "race groups". They include natives, coloureds, Europeans, Whites, Blacks and Coloureds. Clear distinctions between the various groups are constantly made with reference to their group membership, name and/or residence. These procedures had to make sure that as little as possible confusion would arise.

iv. The use of the term "race" in the Population

Registration Act:

The ideology of apartheid and its associated legislation were based on the assumption that the population in South Africa was made up of several discrete and unassimilable groups. The legislation created populations and rigidified the boundaries between them in such a way that the statutory groupings and the resultant very real differences in income and status reinforced the basic assumptions and the existence of racial groups and innate differences (Boonzaier, 1988:63-64).

School literature such as history books as well as the media helped with the spread of these underlying notions, while the possibilities to challenge them at the political level were closed. The assumption of the existence of racial groups gave white South Africans the means to justify the existing differences in power and wealth. It must be stressed that it was the "race paradigm" rather than the concept "race" which created the basis and justification for the political structures that emerged in South Africa. "Pure" racial assumptions, categorisations and arguments nearly never occur. A close examination of the Population Registration Act will show that physical as well as non-physical aspects are used to classify people (1988:64). Prior to 1950 several statutes with ad hoc definitions of racial groups existed which used one or more of the following concepts: appearance, acceptance in the community, and descent. The courts interpreted liberally, making use of the legislature test of appearance and/or general acceptance. But the many borderline cases made it impossible to obtain a definition for the different groups (Standards, 1973:212). The Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 was an attempt at race classification. In order for a person to be white in law, he had to satisfy the tests of appearance and the general acceptance. The Government introduced several amendments to the Act which were used to tighten the requirements by adding descent and what may be termed "non-admission" - which made it nearly impossible to be declared white (whatever the person's appearance or acceptance) if either of his parents had been non-white, or if the person freely and voluntarily admits that he is not

white, for example, in birth certificates, marriage certificates or census returns (Standard,1973:212-213).

For the purpose of appearance, the Act requires that a person's habits, education, speech and deportment, and demeanour in general shall be taken into account; and for the purpose of general acceptance, a white person must be accepted in the area or place where the person is normally resident, where he is employed or has his business and where he mixes socially or shares in other activities with other members of the public. This person must also in general be accepted by the members of his family and other people with whom he resides (Girvin,1987:1-5).

A bantu is a person "who is, or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe", and a Coloured person is a person "who is not a white person or a Bantu". According to section 5, all Bantu and Coloured people must be classified according to the ethnic or group they belong to. Coloureds are divided in the following groups: Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indian, other Asiatics, other Coloureds (Standard,1973:213). A person who is a member of one of the first six groups (the last group is not included) cannot claim to be a member on another due to general acceptance as a member of the other group. The test used in this sub-grouping is full-blood. This means, for example, that a Syrian who is full-blood by origin or descent want be classified as an Indian despite the general acceptance; he will be classified in the group: other Asiatics (Standard,1973:213).

The Population Classification is thus not just based on physical characteristics but involves all kinds of elements of which most are problematic and contentious. The following undefined terms can be identified: "race", "clan", "tribe", and "ethnic or other group", secondly, loose and undefined phrases are used to help classify people such as: "in fact is", "generally accepted as", and "obviously is", thirdly, if it is not possible to use descent as means of classifying, vague characteristics are used, such as: "habits", "education", "speech and deportment", and "demeanour in general" (West,1988:103).

Various other Acts also make use of the classification of the 1950 Act: the Electoral Consolidation Act, and the Prohibition of Political Interference Act. But many major statutes use their own racial definitions, presumably due to delays in preparing and distributing of identity documents. The Acts include the following: the Group Areas Act, the Reservation of Seperate Amenities Act, the Publication of Mixed Marriages Act, and the Immorality Act. Apart from the Acts of Parliament, several ordinances are used at Principal level which also refer, in most cases, to the 1950 Act (Standard,1973:213-214).

It is very clear that from its first occurrence the term "race" has been used in various different and confusing ways: 1. its meaning and use has changed more as several times over the last few decades; 2. various scientists campaign to adhere to the biological explanation of race, but not always do; 3. many contradictory views concerning

the existence or non-existence of the term exist and; 4. the media, literature and the law help with the spread of many misconceptions - the term race is wrongly used when actually talking about nations, tribes, religions, etc. It is thus not surprising that the general public is constantly blamed for not adhering to the biological explanation of race. However, at this point it should be more appropriate to question whether the general public has any understanding of the notion race at all? and if so, does this understanding make sense?

Chapter 3: The contemporary understanding of "race"

Use was made of data collected by first year social anthropology students for their essays titled: "A question of race." As part of their research each student had to interview three members of the public in order to determine people's understanding and perception of the notion race. The questions they had to answer in the essays were: 1. "What they think race is" 2. "How many "races" there are in South Africa, and what they are", and 3. "Whether race is related to any human characteristics or abilities" Data-sheets with similar questions were handed out to several of the students' tutors. The students' essays were sorted out with the help of some of the tutors, and all the available information was copied down on the provided data-sheets (see appendix A). Out of the 150 data-sheets that were sent out to the tutors 87 were returned, each containing answers of three informants. I received thus answers from 261 informants.

However, there were numerous problems with the students' data. Firstly, the questions that had to be answered were set by the students' lecturer prior to the interviews, and I had thus no part in devising them. Secondly, various questions about which I needed information were not asked. These included, more detailed explanations of how informants explain the notion race, and how and why they distinguish between various "races". A third problem was the inconsistent collecting of several aspects of data. For example, I needed more personal details of informants in order to determine whether any distinct categories of

explanations can be distinguished in the answers, and whether specific groups of people can be associated with these categories. Very few answers contained this necessary information.

The extra data I was going to need for the research included: firstly, informants personal data, such as, their occupation, age, sex, religious background, and their membership of the Population Registration; and secondly, more detailed information on peoples' understanding of the notion race. All this necessary information was obtained by conducting various personal interviews.

1. The content of informants' answers:

Only 25 data-sheets containing the answers of 75 informants were used. The answers which were received were usually confusing and complex, and very often the notion race was explained by making use of various aspects or concepts, such as "colour", "culture", "classification method", "socio-economic factors", "hereditary", "geographical origin", "intellectual differences", etc. But although the content of the answers often changed the form of the answers was always very similar. An example of a typical explanation of the notion "race" is the following: "Different races are people with different cultures, languages, and colour." These and other aspects are used in the informants' answers on their own (e.g. "a race is a group with the same culture..."), in two's (e.g. "Groups of people who are different from each other in appearance and culture."), or in larger groups

(e.g. "...distinct groups with different tribal, cultural, and sometimes colour variations.").

The following is an interpretation of some of the aspects that were found in the answers of the informants. In order to make it more comprehensible the data is summerized in table form. Table A represents some of the aspects that make out the informants' definitions of the notion "race".

Table A:

1. "colour"	[Redacted]
2. "culture"	[Redacted]
3. "classification"	[Redacted]
4. "socio-economic"	[Redacted]
5. "hereditary"	[Redacted]
6. "geographical"	[Redacted]
7. "intellectual"	[Redacted]
8. "political"	[Redacted]

In the majority of answers the notion race is explained by using the term "colour", "skinpigmentation" or "skin colour" as distinguishing factors between "races" (50/75); secondly, "culture", cultural heritage", "ethnicity" or "language" (20/75);thirdly, race is seen as a "classification method, "concept to divide", "artificial categorization", or a "means of classifying" (17/75); fourthly, "socio-economic differences" or "economic status" (10/75); fiftly, "hereditary", "common descent" (8/75); sixtly, races are explained as "people from different geograpical regions" or

a "place of origin" (7/75); seventhly, "intellectual differences" between people (3/75), and lastly, the informants named "political manipulation" as a distinguishing factor between "races" (1/75).

Furthermore, I was also concerned with the amount of "races" the general public distinguishes in South Africa, as well as what these "races" are. Out of the sample of seventy-five informants, sixteen different answers could be distinguished. A typical example of such answer would be: "I would say there are four races...Whites, Coloureds, Blacks, and Indians."

The following is a representation of the number of times the existence of specific "races" are mentioned:

1. "Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, Indians" (18/75)
2. "Blacks and Whites" (14/75)
3. "Blacks, Whites, Coloureds" (6/75)
4. "Africans, Whites, Coloureds, Indians" (5/75)
5. "Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, Asians" (5/75)
6. "One race" (4/75)
7. "Africans, Whites, Asians" (4/75)
8. "Negroid, Mongoloid, Caucasian" (4/75)
9. "Plenty" (5/75)
10. "English, Afrikaans, German,...(or an equivalent)(3/75)
11. "Blacks, Coloureds, Indians, English, Afrikaans" (3/75)
12. "Human race" (2/75)
13. "Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, Chinese, Japanese" (2/75)
14. "Europeans, Africans, Asians, Coloureds" (2/75)
15. "Blacks, Whites, Coloureds + subdivisions of Blacks" (1/75)

16. " Negroid, European, Asian, Oriental" (1/75)

The above data shows quite clearly that most informants' understanding of the notion race is very complex. The majority of them agree that race is a group of people with various distinguishing aspects; but the informants do not agree on what these aspects are. However, the majority of informants mention "colour" more often in their answers than any other aspect, and they also distinguish more often between the same four "races", namely, Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians. It seems thus that the Population Registration and skin colour are the factors that influence peoples' understanding (if any) of the notion race the most.

2. The informants' contemporary understanding of race:

In this section the necessary data was obtained from several students' essays as well as from various interviews. All the data was analysed, and together with the data from the first section (data-sheets), I was able to distinguish four different categories of answers. In each category the notion race was described in a different manner; I was able to distinguish physical, cultural, legal and political categories.

i. Race as a "physical" category:

A category of answers that can be distinguished is one relating to physical characteristics. Meaning that the informants explained and distinguished various "races" by referring to their biological differences, and in doing so adhered to the 'scientific' explanations of the notion race.

The various biological aspects that were mentioned included "physical features", "biological aspects", "skinpigmentation", "hairtexture", etc. One of my informants had the following to say:

It's a biological term created by people to make a classification of all human beings...Races are distinguished by their colour, hair texture, etc...I believe there are three...Caucasion, Negroid and Mongoloid."

However, this group of informants who stick to a 'scientific' explanation is very small. The majority of informants who define race as being physical very often make use of other non-biological aspects in their explanations. Especially the answers of 'older' people, belonging to the age group 40 and older, forms a definite different pattern. The majority of their answers are restricted to physical characteristics with very often "colour" ("skin colour", "skin pigmentation") as the only mentioned aspects that form the 'boundaries' between races. A 46 year-old informant stated:

" (It's) a concept of genes, basically. Race is a genotype of physical characteristics. You can catagorise people by their skin colour, their hair texture, etc...undisguisable features that cannot be mistaken."

However, the older peoples' answers concerning the number of races that can be distinguished in South Africa are not 'scientific' at all, but are mainly restricted to the 'race groups' as defined in the legislation, or at least something similar (note that most informants were not very sure about the actual content of the Population Registration Act). My informant stated:

"According to the law there are four, White, Black, Indian and Coloured. I study fish, not people, so I'd have to believe that this government isn't lying to me for once, and that there are in fact four races in South Africa."

Among informants with a higher education it are especially Bsc. students/graduates who are much more 'scientifically' orientated which in turn is projected in their answers. However, very often they confuse race groups with Population Groups. A 24 year-old Zoology student said:

"Race is a term to describe the clustering of genetic features differentiating one population group as a whole from other population groups...In South Africa we've got Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and Indians."

Furthermore, it seems that a large amount of people (especially the younger generation, 18-39) restrict their explanations of "race" by referring to a mixture of various aspects, including, cultural, legal, political and physical aspects. The physical aspects are thus only part of their answer. A 23 year-old White male who studied Food Management confused the concept race with ethnic groups, Population Groups, and even language groups; and these "races" are differentiated by their "culture" and "skin colour":

"Race pertains basically to the different ethnic groups...basically differentiating cultures and colour of skin. There are commonly four races: Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and Indians...but hell,...there are many more. I mean, you get English speaking Whites, Afrikaans speaking Whites, Italian speaking Whites..."

In this category three "types" of informants could be distinguished: Firstly, the few 'informed' who stick to a 'scientific' explanation of race and who obtained their knowledge through education or self-reading. This type of informants is found among all Population and age groups;

secondly, I distinguish informants who define the differences between "races" as being physical, but unfortunately confuse the notion race with Population Groups. They include especially older people (40 and older) and Bsc students/graduates (excluding first year students who are not yet sufficiently influenced by their line of study). The third and largest group are informants who only mention physical differences as part of many other differences and who confuse the notion race with an unbelievable amount of other concepts, such as tribes, language groups, ethnic groups, Population Groups, etc. They include especially young people (18-39).

The majority of informants explained the notion race by referring to physical aspects (see appendix B). However, the various "races" they distinguish are the same or similar to the Population Groups appearing in the legislation (see appendix C).

ii. Race as a "cultural" category:

A second category of answers that can be distinguished is the "cultural" category. Informants from all Population and age groups explained and distinguished "races" by stating the cultural differences of their "races". The answers in this category included aspects such as "religion", "language", "cultural behaviour", "upbringing", "ethnicity", "beliefs", and "tradition". A significant feature is that the term "culture" is used, or on its own (e.g. "A race is people with the same culture"), or together with other cultural aspects as if they are not part of peoples' culture (e.g. "Races are groups with different cultures, languages

and religions..."). Cultural aspects are also used on their own without mentioning the word culture at all (e.g. "(It's) a classification of people by language, belief, etc.). According to my informants races are ethnic groups, language groups, religious groups, nationalities, tribes, etc. Several of these informants also state that there are "lots", "plenty" and "many" races. Even numbers are given, such as "10", "20" and "1000". The following are examples: "Many, ranging from black tribes to immigrants from other countries...", "Plenty + subdivisions including English and Afrikaans", "Thousands of cultural races, such as Xhosa, Greeks, Germans, etc."

My Jewish informants were no exception on the rule, except for the fact that most of them stressed the existence of a Jewish race. One of the extremes was a 18 year-old Jewish student who confused the concept race with concepts such as, culture, ethnic group, religion, nationality and language. When I asked him what he thought a race was, he was very uncertain, and believed it to be "something that is build over time", and that it has to do with "certain ideas and culture" of people. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that "race" is "passed on from generation to generation." To me it seemed that this informant confused the notion race with the term culture. When I questioned him on this he explained that cultures are indeed the same as races. He furthermore believed that every religion and nationality constituted different races. He stated: "There is a race within a race...I might belong to let's say, to Judaism and South African (race), and another, Christian and also South

African, and you could be part of the same race." When asking him to be more precise about his understanding of a "race within a race", he went even more extreme and distinguished his "main race", namely, South African, from his "sub-races", namely, "religion and most probably language." Thus according to this informant he belongs to three different "races" at the same time: a South African "race", a Jewish "race", and an English "race".

Another important aspect to mention is the religious explanations of the notion "race" by people. The few informants who provided me with detailed religious explanations were mostly older people (40 and older). A 64 year-old White accountant had the following to say:

"When God created Adam and Eve they had all the characteristics of people. They had two sons, Caine and Abel, and presumably also daughters, but that is not mentioned in the bible. Out of these few people, a tribe evolved. There were four main tribes which 'grew-up' to become nations. There were twelve nations, and each son of Abraham got one nation. And out of these twelve nations you get four main races, namely, white, black, brown, and yellow people. These four have also several sub-divisions, such as, Bushmen, Hottentots, Xhosa, Jews, etc."

Like in the previous category (race as a "physical" category) a large number of informants' answers are made up out of various different aspects, of which cultural aspects are only part. A good example of this are Bcom.

students/graduates who often restrict their answers to a mixture of aspects, including, colour, religion, language, etc. The largest misconceptions and confusions of the notion race are also found in this category. A 20 year-old Indian Bcom. student confused the notion race with nationalities, she said:

"Race is not the same as racial groups...all the people living in South Africa are of the South African race, we are all equal...you are either South African or you are American or something else, these are races."

The second largest number of informants explained the notion race by using the concept culture or related aspects (see appendix B). However, when naming their "races" the majority of them restricted their answer to the various Population Groups as defined in the legislation (see appendix C).

iii. Race as a "legal" category:

A third category of answers that can be distinguished is a legal category. Meaning that the informants understand and explain race to be a concept created by people to help classify humans into specific groups. However, only a small number of informants answered in this manner (see table c) and the "races" they distinguished were often very different. They included: Population , language, colour, cultural, physical and religious groups. One of my informants was of the opinion that "race" was a classification method based on "skincolour", "nationality", and "religion". Another informant thought that it was an attempt to classify people according to their "colour" and "language"; while still another informant insisted that the classification according to skin colour was wrong. And although she agreed that the Government had created the "race groups" as found in South Africa she had a different opinion:

" Our Government classifies South Africans according to the colour of their skin...It would, however, be much better to classify them according to their cultural background."

I found that the majority of "races" that are mentioned in this category are the same or similar as the Population Groups as found in the legislation. Mostly of the time the "race groups" Black, White, Coloured and Indian are mentioned: " According to the Government legislation there are four: Indian, Black, White, and Black..."

However, during the interviews and analysis of the essays a constant uncertainty concerning the classification method could be noticed. A 23 year-old student was of the opinion that race was nothing more but a classification method, and although she acknowledged the Government classification, she believed that the number of races is determined by the manner of classification. She had the following to say: It depends again if you classify them in terms of colour or ethnic groups. There are commonly four races: Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and Indians...but hell...there are many more. I mean, you get English speaking Whites...I could go on and on...I don't know...I'd say there are about one hundred different races in South Africa."

iv. Race as a political statement:

A fourth and last category I distinguished is one relating to politics. Informants explained the notion race by referring to political acts, most of them concerning discrimination. An informant called it "a concept used by the South African authorities to monitor people."

Furthermore, I found that membership of a specific Population Group is not as influential in determining people's understanding of the notion race as I believed it

to be. In all four Population Groups the younger generation (18-39) is more 'political' in their answering and more eager to mention that race is a term to classify and manipulate people. However, it were especially "Black" youngsters who mention more often the existance of only "one race" or "human race": "Race is a biological term and refers to the human race...it has always been used for political ends."

However, not one of these informants was able to ellaborate on this subject, exopt for the fact that they knew it to exist. Furthermore, I found that several informants' answers had a political undertone. They were dissatisfied with the Governments' "race classification based on skin colour", and often they made suggestions for a new type of classification based on the cultural bakground of people. Furthermore, these informants also confused "race groups" with Population Groups. A good illustration of this is the following conversation I had with a 23 year old African student. When asking whether he agreed with many other Africans that there exists only one race, he told me that altough he found it a very interesting way of thinking, he prefered to belief that behaviour of people determines their race. He said:

"...everybody who behaves like an African, never mind their colour of their skin...and does what the Africans do, he is classified as Black." To illustrate his way of thinking he gave me the example of the singer Johnny Clegg. He was of the opinion that Johnny Clegg is an African; this is due to his upbringing among the Zulus in Natal, and also because of "the way he does things and speaks." For this informant the Government classification according to skin was wrong, and

he suggested a new classification based on peoples' way of living.

Very few informants explained the notion race as being a legal category (see appendix B). However, the majority of informants distinguished the various Population Groups as defined in the legislation when they were asked to name them. (see appendix C).

Conclusion:

Before the Population Registration Act was introduced in 1950, the majority of the general public explained the notion race as national, religious, geographical, linguistic, or cultural groups. And in accordance the "races" they distinguished included, a Dutch race, English race, Bushmen race, Catholic race, etc. And although skin colour must have played an important role in distinguishing between, for example, natives, coloureds and Europeans, I do not think that it was as important as it is today.

In fact, only after the introduction of the Population Registration Act did skin colour become more significant in laypeople's explanation of the notion race. And although today, people's explanation of "race" as a physical category is still very strong, they also explain race more and more as being a "political tool" or a "classification method". And of course "race" as a cultural, religious, population, nationality, and geographical group is still very often mentioned. This means that the general public's basic understanding of the notion race is still much the same as it was several decades or centuries ago. Terminology does therefore not always reflect the underlying assumptions and thoughts about the nature of human groups and innate differences. In other words, when the majority of informants talk about a "race" they are actually talking about ethnic groups; laymen have does no or little understanding of the 'scientific' meaning of the concept race.

The enormous diversity and confusing answers I received from my informants is a result of this misunderstanding, and is probably caused by: 1. differences in education levels and the content of the material studied, 2. lack of correct information, 3. the views of "non-whites" that were taken in consideration in this research (especially in the past only "white" views were represented in the media, schooltextbooks, etc.), 4. social influences, 5. the influence of the Population Registration Act, and 5. the term "race" which is slowly loosing its importance as a concept of debate, and instead 'cultures' or 'ethnic groups' continue to provide fertile terrain for the perpetuation of many of the underlying notions associated with the race paradigm.

It is therefore that the re-education of the general public has to be given high priority; attempts must be made to explain and distinguish between the meaning of the 'scientific' race and the various public "races". The "race" problem is not just a matter of faulty semantics. Racism, for example, will not be conquered by enclosing the word in quotes. It is not the word that requires changing but people's ideas about it.

Appendix:

A.

1. Name:

Tutorial group:

Mark obtained:

2. Understanding of "race"

A.....

B.....

C.....

3. "Races" named:

A.....

B.....

C.....

4. Related to...

A.....

B.....

C.....

5. Comments:

A.....

B.....

C.....

B.

The notion "race" explained as a...category

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Physical 37/75

Cultural 25/75

Political 8/75

Legal 5/75

C.

The various "races" distinguished by informants are...

		<u>Physical 3/75</u>
		<u>Political 6/75</u>
		<u>Cultural 7/75</u>
		<u>Legal 68/75</u>

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