On Poor Whites in Post-Apartheid Cities: The Case of Bloemfontein

Nick Schuermans and Gustav Visser

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of white poverty in post-apartheid South Africa has recently drawn increased attention from a number of quarters. For example, in research released by the University of South Africa's Bureau for Market Research, it was estimated that at least 400 000 whites---or about ten percent of the white population-- currently live below the poverty line, as compared to none in 1990 (SABC, 2004). Whilst these pronouncements made for some rather sensational newspaper headlines, the true dimensions of this phenomenon remain mostly unexplored 2. In large part, this state of affairs points to some deficiencies in contemporary South African scholarship, in which the development of research programmes designed to focus on "white lives" has dwindled (Visser, 2003).

In contrast to South African social scientists' "white" research focus for most of the twentieth century, the research community has, over the past 20 years or so, paid detailed attention to the country's non-white, marginalised communities grappling with apartheid-induced poverty, unemployment and homelessness, among other issues (Maharaj and Narsiah, 2002). Some research fields, such as urban studies, human geography, and sociology have become highly active in the academic investigation of these aspects of non-white lives in the late apartheid era, as well as the post-apartheid era. However, Visser (2003) contends that, whilst this shift of focus to those in most need of research attention is certainly to be applauded, this situation has implicitly led to the idea that South Africa's white residents are all the same: unquestionably "normal", middle-class/wealthy, and certainly not marginalised, poor, unemployed, or homeless (Visser, 2003: 221). The recent rise of populist white-poverty debates in South Africa suggests that this position of "white normality" requires re-examination--for not all whites are wealthy, included and empowered. Indeed, a small but increasing number of whites are becoming poor, marginalised and excluded from the broader post-apartheid society (Schuermans, 2004).

Our understanding of white poverty draws on two key sets of in-depth interviews. In an exploratory phase, interviews were held with seven privileged informants who had a great deal of information at their disposal. At least one representative of each of the four partly or fully govemment-subsidised welfare organisations in Bloemfontein was interviewed. These interviews lasted for between one and two hours and were recorded and transcribed. Topics included a short presentation of the social work embedded in the national policy, a personal definition of poverty, a delimitation of white poverty in social and geographical space, survival strategies and background explanations for this poverty, both at the micro- and the macrolevel. Secondly, interviews were conducted with 24 poor whites. The selection of the first respondents was based on data from the welfare organisations, for example, information concerning people who frequented a soup kitchen or sought refuge

in a shelter out of town. Afterwards, the sample was expanded through the inclusion of other people living in the poor neighbourhoods and acquaintances of those interviewed. In this way, not only the absolutely poor were reached, but also persons who were non-chronically, relatively poor.

In all 24 interviews, the same pattern was followed. Firstly, the interviewee was asked to narrate his/her life story and current position. A second part of the interview entailed the completion of a questionnaire concerning various types of capital. This was then used as the basis for an in-depth interview, during which additional questions were asked about the given answers and their motivations. The resulting sample is purposive, in the sense that diversity was sought in terms of age, gender and employment status. In this way insight could be gained into the various backgrounds and situations of poor people with different capital pentagons. However, an extrapolation of the results to the total poor-white population of South Africa would be difficult, as the sample was not meant to be statistically representative. The scope of this study did not allow, for example, for an extensive spatial approach. Most of the interviews were conducted in two poor neighbourhoods in Bloemfontein, namely Ehrlich Park and Oranjesig. As a consequence, nothing is known about the situation of poor whites in the city's wealthier residential areas or in the surrounding countryside.

This paper will present the empirical results of this fieldwork in five sections. Firstly, a summary of the history of white poverty will be provided, along with a consideration of the contemporary prevalence of poverty among the different South African population groups. The second section draws attention to the difference between absolute and relative poverty, while the third section focuses on the difference between poverty and vulnerability, and the factors that increase the vulnerability of whites. The fourth section elaborates on the multidimensionality of these factors, against a framework of five different types of capital. It is argued that the structural factors underlying contemporary white poverty originated in the last three decades, and not only in the years after 1994. Before a conclusion is reached, the spatiality of these types of capital will be investigated in a final section. In this way, we will demonstrate how the marginalised position of the interviewees in segregated urban space exacerbates their vulnerability.

WHITE POVERTY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SOUTH AFRICA

White poverty has a long history in South Africa. In 1932, for example, the Carnegie report estimated that a total of 300 000 whites, or 17 percent of the total white population, were poor (Giliomee, 2003: 347). At least until 1939, the existence of such a large white underclass, constituted mainly of Afrikaners, was the most burning issue on the political agenda (Giliomee, 2003). The importance attributed to this "poor white" problem was not only a result of their voting power, but also of a general concern about the future of the white race. In 1932, for example, Malherbe stated that "a very appreciable portion of our white population is sinking below the economic standard of living which we consider that a white man should maintain by virtue of his white skin over the native" (cf. Giliomee, 2002: 643). As a consequence, Malherbe concluded that the existence of poor whites was "a menace to the self-preservation and prestige of the white people" (Malherbe, 1981: 119).

These factors led to a range of policy responses in an attempt to solve the problem, focusing, in the first place, on the unemployment of the poor. In terms of the so-called "civilised labour policy" non-white unskilled workers on the railways and in other fields of state employment were replaced, as far as possible, by poor whites, preferably at a

"civilised" wage level. As a result, by the early 1950s, more than 100 000 mainly unskilled and semi-skilled whites worked for the railways. Furthermore, the Iron and Steel Corporation (Iscor) began production in 1933 with an all-white worker complement (Giliomee, 2002: 635). In terms of social welfare measures, nearly half of the whites received old-age pensions, or illness or disability grants (Giliomee, 2002: 649). Housing companies mushroomed all over South Africa. Their mission was to build new sub-economic suburbs where the poor whites could find an environment that would uplift and educate them, in order to ensure that they would become "good whites" (Teppo, 2004). During the early years of the apartheid era, the state consolidated this extensive welfare state for white South Africans. Poverty among whites was thus practically eradicated, certainly after the booming of the economy during the Second World War and the 1960s.

By the 1970s, the entire apartheid system was undergoing serious resistance from internal political opposition and international pressure (Worden, 1994). As a consequence, these years witnessed the first signs that the government was prepared to modify apartheid policy, albeit in minor ways. The dual impact of previous economic growth and the adaptation of apartheid labour policies resulted, on the one hand, in the upward social mobility of sections of the non-white community in previously exclusively white professions, such as teaching, nursing, technical positions, the priesthood and routine white-collar jobs (Crankshaw, 1996). On the other hand, this situation led to a weakening of racial protectionism extended to poorer whites (Hyslop, 2000: 49) and the re-emergence of a small poor-white cohort. Resistance to these changes was rather limited in extent, as the subjectivities of the white population shifted from a strong identification with the modernist, racist project of apartheid, to far more individualised and consumerist self-identities (Hyslop, 2000).

This evolution intensified after 1994. The post-apartheid transition ushered in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) as the basis of government policy. In terms of the RDP, the African National Congress (ANC) advocated a government-led social and material programme of investments in infrastructure, to be followed by economic growth on the basis of increasing private investments. The emphasis on redistribution has certainly benefited the most vulnerable in society, especially in terms of basic needs. For example, 1.3 million homes have been connected to electricity and one million to water (Smith, 1999: 163). Radical geographers, however, describe how rapid ideological changes took place, as pressure from the World Bank, the IMF and the inherited net-liberal order and media, along with the fall of the Soviet Union, moderated initial ANC radicalism (Peet, 2002). The government party decided to pay more attention to deregulation, privatisation and trade liberalisation, recognising implicitly the superiority of the market over state regulation. Indeed, through the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan--although in theory this plan was complementary to the RDP--the ANC attempted to achieve "redistribution through growth", entailing the creation of employment and redistribution by means of an expansion of private initiatives, preferably in labour-intensive sectors (Peet, 2002).

The opinions on the concrete consequences of this policy choice with regard to inequality in South Africa vary. Advocates of the policy conclude that inequality has decreased significantly since 1994, largely as a result of the spread of basic services or the broadening of social security through government grants. Other commentators argue that "the acquiescence to free market doctrines [...] impedes large-scale effective redistribution" (Lester et al., 2000: 146). They are convinced that inequality has increased since 1994, and draw attention to the fact that the poorest half of South Africa, across the racial divides, earned only 9.7 percent of the national income in 2000, compared to 11.4

percent in 1995. Moreover, the number of households with an income of less than R670 per month, increased from 20 percent of the population in 1995 to 28 percent in 2000 (Bond, 2003: 7).

The same data provide evidence of the changing characteristics of this inequality. Woolard's (2002) calculations on the basis of 1995 income data, for example, revealed that differences between the races were responsible for only 40 percent of the total inequality, while differences within the black and white population groups accounted for 33 and 21 percent, respectively. Figure 1 shows that redistribution from whites to non-whites did, in fact, take place, at least between 1991 and 1996; but only the richest cohorts of black, coloured and Indian society have benefited from this (Smith 1999, Lester et al., 2000). On the other side of the coin, a small but growing minority of whites have sunk into poverty (compare UNDP-1995 and UNDP-2002 in Table 1). Thus, whilst racial boundaries fade, the distribution of South African wealth remains very unequal. Bond (2003) calls this phenomenon "class apartheid".

Figure 1

Evolution of the annual family ihcome of various income classes per race between 1991 and 1996, in percentages
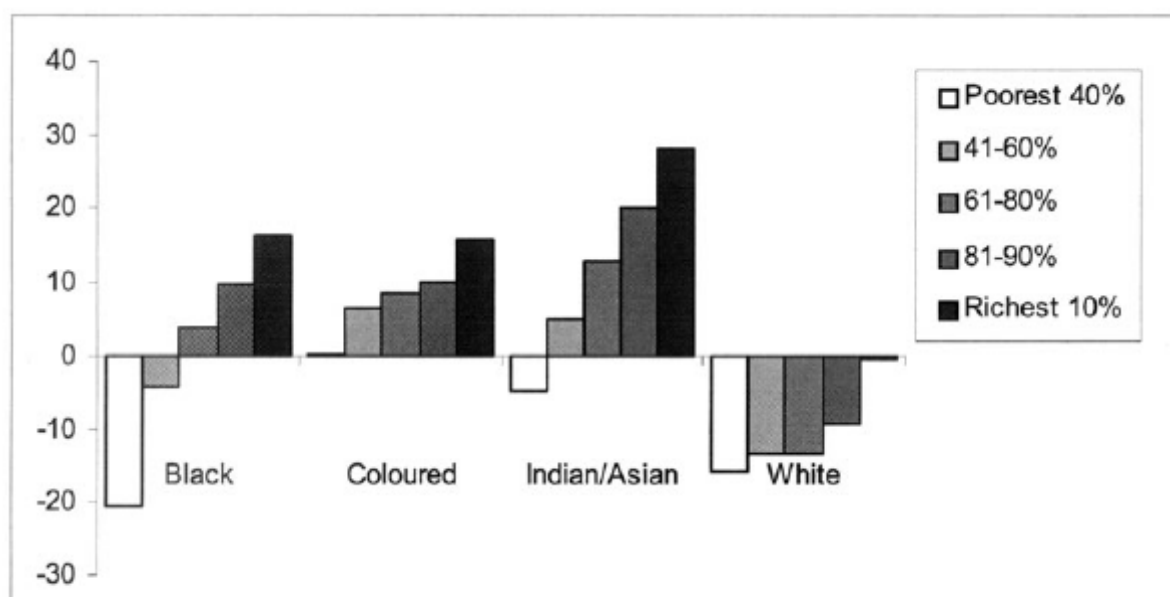
Source: Whiteford and Van Seventer 1999: 20

Table 1

### The headcount index, percentage poor people within each racial group

	Van der Berg	Woolard	Klasen	Smith	UNDP-1995	UNDP-2002
White	1.4%	2,1%	< 5%	0,7%	1,5%	6,9%
Indian	4,7%	6,8%	< 5%	0,0%	8,3%	14,7%
Coloured	19,0%	19,8%	17,0%	12,2%	38,5%	36,1%
Black	47,4%	57,2%	52,0%	67,1%	62,0%	56,3%

Sources: Van der Berg 2003; Woolard 2002; Klasen 2000; Smith 1999; UNDP 2003

Notwithstanding all these changes, poverty and affluence in South Africa still have clear racial dimensions (May, 2001). Table 1 indicates that a particularly small minority of whites can be called poor nowadays, whereas at least half of the black population live in (chronic) poverty. This large group consists, according to Aliber (2003), mainly of the rural poor, female-headed households, people with disabilities, the elderly, retrenched farm workers, cross-border migrants, the homeless, AIDS orphans and households with members who are AIDS sufferers. Figure 2 shows an identical picture on the basis of expenditure per racial population group.

Figure 2

Number of households by monthly expenditure group in Rand, by race, 2001
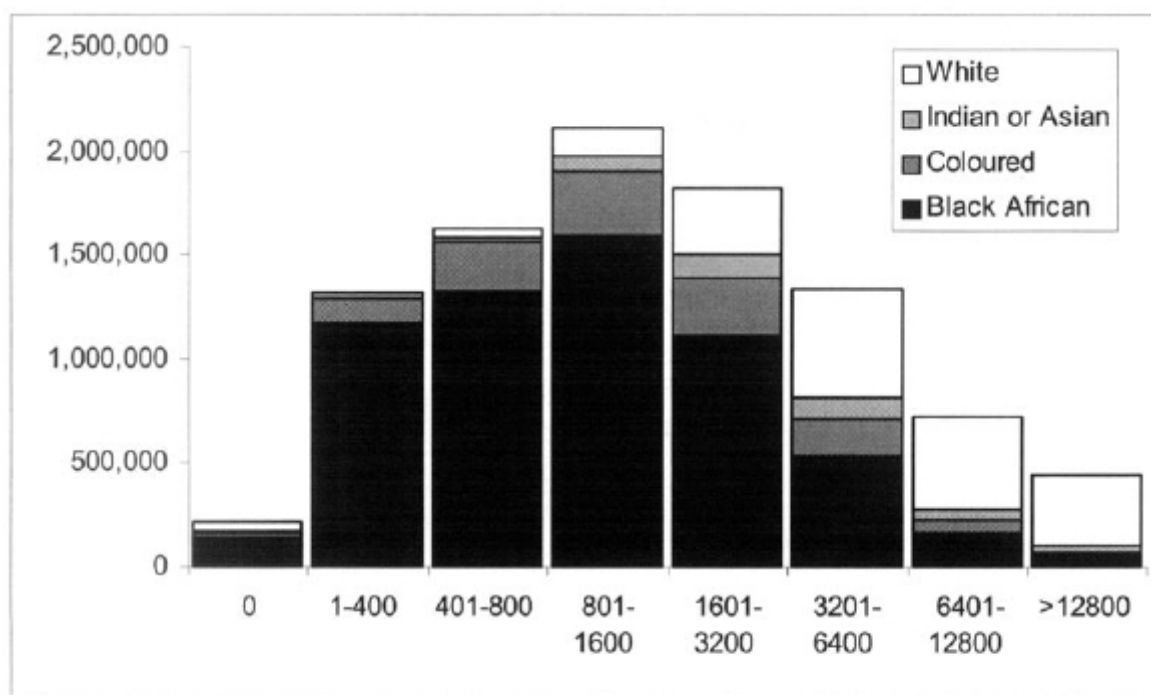
Source: Statistics South Africa 2001

The origin of this enormous discrepancy must be sought in the recent history of the country (Aliber, 2003). The concentration of wealth among the white population derives, in the main, from their power in the political arena at the time of colonialism, segregation and apartheid in the previous century, as well as the associated "institutonalised racism" (May, 1998). Despite South Africa's enormous economic, social and political transformation, many of the processes and dynamics that were set up at the time of apartheid are still reproducing these dominant patterns of poverty and inequality. Race is thus undoubtedly still important in contemporary South Africa. However, in this section it is argued that, following the occurrence of minor ideological changes in the 1970s, and the deepening of these changes in the post-apartheid era, a black skin does not necessarily undermine all opportunities, just as being white no longer guarantees prosperity. Despite the fact that non-whites still represent the vast majority of poor South Africans, "black only poverty" is definitely something of the past.

ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE POVERTY

In the course of history, the unambiguous definition and elucidation of poverty has always been problematic. Repeatedly, sociologists and economists have suggested new understandings of poverty, as well as indicators associated with its measurement. In this way, researchers starting out with the same source data can end up with different results (see Klasen, 2000). Therefore, Yapa (2002:44) stresses that social problems such as poverty do not exist in an external world independently of the social science discourses that investigate them. As these discourses are implicated as a causative agent when such a problem is named and defined, and when root causes are assigned and when prescriptions are suggested, all based on a certain conceptualisation of poverty, it is impossible to develop a completely neutral, unbiased, objective and value-free theory of poverty (Yapa, 1996). This does not mean that any theory on poverty could be used in any study, or that there should be no theory at all. Current thinking suggests a need for a contextually anchored framework of analysis (Townsend, 1993), demonstrating awareness of its relative lack of comprehensiveness within the plurality of existing concepts. In the following sections an endeavour will be made to develop such a framework for the analysis of white poverty in a South African urban context and relate it to our empirical findings.

Initial theories on poverty were developed from absolute "physiological" (Lok-Dessallien, 1999) or "biological" (Sen, 1981) perspectives. In the early 20th century Rowntree, for instance, defined poverty as a situation in which the total level of family earnings was insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of the "merely physical efficiency" of the family members (cf. World Bank, 2000:17). He included food, rent and other items in his analysis. Recently there has been a tendency to expand this concept of physical needs, incorporating access to public services as well (Townsend, 1993). Despite criticism, such an absolute poverty line is still in use as a criterion, as seen in the World Bank's so-called dollar-a-day poverty line (World Bank, 1990) or the South African Bureau of Market Research's Minimum Living Level.

Most of the interviewed social workers also conceptualised poverty in absolute terms, stating, for example: "It is about housing, water and electricity, food and clothing", or "For me someone is poor when he has no income or when his income is below the poverty line, R1400 a month. Then you will not have enough money to survive, irrespective of colour". A lack of food was often central to this definition: "There is poverty when people cannot provide for their basic needs and consequently experience malnutrition" or "Ultimately food is crucial, naturally. There are many people here who are starving".

Townsend (1993), however, emphasises that a person is not only expected to survive, but also to fulfil his duty as a worker, citizen, parent, neighbour, friend, etc. As a consequence, our needs are not merely determined by our physical environment, but also by our social habitat. In other words: poverty must be viewed in relation to the available social and institutional structures, too. Townsend thus refers to people as "relatively poor" if they cannot obtain the living conditions--diets, facilities, norms and services--to fulfil their roles, participate in relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society (Townsend, 1993: 36).

When we asked the social workers whether "basic needs" are the same for blacks and whites, it became clear that this kind of relativity was considered important. According to some of the (white) social workers, especially those who were working principally in the former white neighbourhoods, it is difficult to compare the situation of blacks with that of whites, because of their different backgrounds. For whites, they remarked, the social

environment is more demanding regarding the means of subsistence deemed necessary in order not to be poor. This divide is rooted in history. In this respect, the social workers highlighted how whites and blacks lived in separate worlds during, but also after apartheid, each with their own customs regarding food, for instance. One social worker noted:

> "When a black person and a white person each earn R500, the black person can do more with that money because of his background. Under the previous regime, the whites were used to having more money and goods. Now they must do the same with less money, and that is difficult. They cannot do any more what they used to do. (...) There is a cultural difference. They grew up differently. For instance, blacks eat porridge three times a day. Porridge is part of their culture. (...) Three times a day they eat porridge with something else. But it will be difficult to find a white family that is prepared to eat porridge three times a day. Therefore R500 in a white family is not as much as R500 in a black family.(...)The white family will still try to eat bread three times a day. (...) For the whites it is ridiculous to change all of a sudden from bread to porridge".

It is important not to lose sight of the difference between absolute and relative poverty. On the one hand, the ideas of most of the social workers indicated that poverty in South Africa is chiefly a problem of survival or a deficiency in respect of basic needs, and even a lack of food in some cases, also among whites. On the other hand, our interviewees made it clear that white poverty is a relative problem for others, who find it difficult to adopt the standard of living expected of them in the white community. Failure to do so is associated with feelings of deep shame. The poor whites who were interviewed seemed to compare their present-day situation with their own situation in the past, or with that of other whites now, but rarely with that of their non-white compatriots.

POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

A fundamental criticism of the concept of the poverty line, in both the absolute and the relative sense, is that small changes in income can move people across the line, even though no change of any significance has occurred to the individual or family involved (Bane and Ellwood, 1985). In this light, a distinction should therefore be made between a large group of people who are below the poverty line for a short period of time, the transient poor; and a smaller group of people who never escape poverty, the chronic poor (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003). If we admit that poverty is such a dynamic concept, we cannot restrict our analysis to the particular group of people who are poor at a given time. Some people just above the poverty line are also vulnerable, facing adjustments in their income or expenditure.

During each interview, the question as to which event(s) had significantly contributed to the process of falling into poverty was considered. On the one hand, sometimes the cause was an external event over which the person in question had little or no control, such as a car accident or a serious disease. On the other hand, some respondents could be deemed to be at least partly responsible for their own loss of assets, or their incorrect management of available assets. For some people, their change of circumstances occurred through a shock event, for example, a resignation. For others, the problem originated as a result of a bad trend, starting, for example, with the lodging of an extra housemate. For still others, it was difficult to determine a concrete cause for their poverty. Table 2 summarises the various observed transitions in respect of poverty status over the past five years, along with the associated causes. It must be noted that this table is merely an illustration, as the

source data are merely personal interpretations of the information provided by the respondents during the interviews, and do not comprise explicit measurements on the basis of poverty indicators.

Table 2

Factors contributing to a change in poverty status

| | | STATUS 5 YEARS AGO | | |
		Chronic poor	Transient poor	Non-poor
S T A T U S	Chronic poor	Extra housemate Too old for job Unemployed Handicapped sister	Medical problems Dismissal Rent raised Resignation Relative decrease grant	Car accident Divorced
N O W	Transient poor	Old-age pension Temporary job	Children Poorly paid	Alcohol problem Business bankrupt Accident at work
	Non-poor	No incidents found	No incidents found	Good wage husband

Sources: According to Hulme and Shepherd 2003: 415; own completion based on interviews

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY AND FORMS OF CAPITAL

In the investigation of people's susceptibility to external threats, it is important to focus on their ability to cope with negative shocks or fluctuations. In this respect, it is best to focus on the assets that individuals or households can mobilise and manage in the face of hardship, rather than to emphasise the goods and services they lack (Moser, 1998). Closely related to this notion is Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concept of "capital", an accumulation of labour in its embodied, objectified or institutionalised form, which has the potential to realise different types of profit. The possession of capital is crucial in the fight against external threats. The more capital one owns, the less vulnerable one is. The more one's capital has been eroded, the greater one's insecurity (Moser, 1998).

According to Bourdieu (1986), economic theory often reduces all potential exchanges to economic exchanges. However, some "things" without a "real price" (i.e., without exchange value) are not useless (i.e., they do have a utility value) for poor or vulnerable people. Table 2 demonstrates, for example, how difficult it is to reduce the factors contributing to a change in poverty status to mere negative economic changes. As a consequence, it is important to consider the totality of forms of capital. According to Bourdieu there are three: economic, cultural and social capital. All three are interrelated, but energy is lost in the transformation of one form into another. Economic capital is the basis of the two other types, as the time required for the production of social and cultural capital can always be invested in labour, and thus in the increase of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). However, cultural and social capital are not fully reducible to economic capital; and hence they differ significantly from the latter.

Several investigators have built on this framework, drawing attention to other types of capital. Currently, the following types of capital have been distinguished, among others: employment, health, financial, physical, human, social, symbolic, psychological, public, political, institutional and educative capital, both at the individual and the group level (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003; May, 1998; Moser, 1998; Piachaud, 2002). Within this plurality, labour, financial, material, personal and social capital were selected as the greatest common denominators of the various theoretical conceptualisations of the above-mentioned series, mostly based on Moser (1998).

Labour Capital

In an urban environment, labour is a significant means of resistance against poverty, be it directly in the form of wage work, or indirectly, via the sale of goods and services on formal or informal markets (Moser, 1998). Most of the social workers interviewed, as well as the poor themselves, even regarded a lack of labour capital as the main cause of poverty. Not having a job, or having an insecure job that is poorly paid in a country without a comprehensive unemployment insurance system, is problematic. Hence it is notable that only four of the interviewees were employed; six mentioned that another member of the family was the breadwinner; while in 14 families, nobody was employed. The interviewees in the latter case were usually older people, or women in families with children, but also men who were ready to enter the labour market who found it difficult to find a (formal)job.

In the past decade, the total number of jobs has increased at a slower rate than the population, thus increasing the national unemployment rate. In terms of the broad or expanded definition of unemployed persons, incorporating those who did not take any active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the survey, the unemployment rate rose from 31.5 percent in October 1994 to 41.0 percent in September 2004 (Statistics South Africa, 1996; Statistics South Africa, 2004). It must, however, be noted that this figure is much lower for whites than for blacks. The last Labour Force Survey indicated that 47.8 percent of blacks, 30.4 percent of coloureds, 20.8 percent of Indians and only 8.3 percent of whites were unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2004). Nevertheless, many whites find it difficult to obtain a good job, especially younger people and those over 45 years of age. A guaranteed job is definitely something of the past for whites.

A growing number of whites are falling into the category of "working poor". Their income is not adequate to rise above the poverty line. On the one hand, this can be explained by a lack of permanent employment, and consequently a lack of regular income. Persons are contracted for short-term jobs, or work on a commission basis, as taxi-drivers do. On the other hand, the problem of unemployment is so severe that many whites are prepared to work for a very low wage. This category includes security officers, packers in supermarkets, and "car watchers". Frequently their "jobs" are informal. Some elderly persons, for instance, prepare pancakes at the entrance of a shopping centre, or sell home-made rusks at flea markets. Others try to earn some money by doing "private jobs" for others, such as gardening, cleaning or ironing, for R50 or less a day.

This aggravated situation can be partly attributed to the influx of blacks in the city. Since the liberalisation of the housing market with the Free Settlement Act (1986) and the suspension of the pass laws (1988), as well as the abolishment of the restriction on land ownership, in terms of which whites had always been favoured (1991) (Christopher, 1998), blacks have been able to move freely to the city. As a consequence, the black population

of Bloemfontein increased from 115 420 to 269 277 between 1985 and 2001, whereas the white population declined from 99 349 to 77 873 over the same period. The coloured population almost doubled from 18 591 to 30 447 (Jtirgens et al., 2003: 41; Statistics South Africa, 2001). This population growth definitely placed pressure on the available labour market. Although many of the new inhabitants were commuters from Botshabelo, the city also attracted people seeking employment from other rural and urban areas in the province (Krige, 1998).

This factor is even more important in the context of affirmative action, the govemment's policy to adjust the racial and gender composition of the labour market, aimed at addressing the negative effects of the discriminatory economic and social policies of the past. Through "positive" discrimination, the government intends to achieve a more balanced composition of the working population, in accordance with the composition of the population as far as race, colour, gender and disability are concemed. In the first instance, this policy is aimed at addressing the former privileged position of male Afrikaners in the public sector. As a result, the component of whites in government services dropped from 87 percent to 21 per cent between 1994 and 1997 (Martin, 1999: 625). Moreover, a larger number of whites employed at local, provincial or national authorities and in parastatals, such as the railways and the post office, lost (or resigned from) their jobs. Besides, economic incentives tend to drive many managers of private companies in the same direction, although affmnative action is not compulsory for them (Martin, 1999).

As the official unemployment rate among whites does not tend to rise dramatically, and certainly not to the level experienced by non-whites, the primary effect of this policy is psychological. A social worker observed:

> In general during apartheid whites were raised with the idea that they would find a job, that they would find work in any case. Not necessarily well paid, but they could be certain of a basic standard of living. Because you had work. You did not have to worry too much. Now there are 100 people applying for one job. Do you understand that difference?

A poor woman, 53 years old declared:

> "When your skin is white, you cannot get a job. The whites are kicked out. Apartheid was much better. Then a white man could still live. The whites are now kicked out and the blacks get preference. (…) Now it is apartheid again, but in reverse".

Apparently, some individuals become discouraged by the transition from a guaranteed job to the necessity of competing for one. They no longer seek employment, because of the perception that they are of the wrong age or race. Repeated rejection leads to discouragement and despondency. Moreover, some people find it very difficult to do "inferior" jobs. Qualified people, for instance, are disheartened when they can only find a job which does not require their qualifications. This mental transition is even greater for people who did not undergo further education. Having to do a "black" job, being "forced" to work with non-whites as equals, or even in a subordinate position, may motivate some people to resign, or not to take on a particular job, according to the social workers. As a consequence, it is not surprising that the majority of the whites who were interviewed did not consider affirmative action to be an essential tool for greater justice in South Africa, but rather as "apartheid in reverse".

Financial capital

In the context of the reduced access to labour capital, many whites must seek alternative sources of income, in the form of some kind of financial capital (Piachaud, 2002). In the first place, these alternatives can be found in the form of monthly allowances from the state. The South African state directs quite a large part of the total GDP to social security needs, especially in comparison with other developing countries (Van der Berg, 1997). The government, for example, provides a social old-age pension, which amounted to R700 a month at the time of this research. A second form of social grant is the child maintenance benefit for parents whose joint monthly income does not exceed R800. Once the children have reached the age of eight years, the monthly R130 is no longer paid out. In the present system it is only foster parents and parents with severely handicapped or chronically ill children, e.g., AIDS sufferers, who enjoy the benefit of state cover until the children have reached the age of 18. They receive R450 per month per child. A third kind of allowance, comprising an amount of R700, is available for those who qualify as medically unfit (including the blind).

The development of these provisions started shortly after the First World War. At that time, the system was racially discriminatory, in the sense that more whites were considered for social grants. In addition, the "white grants" were larger than those for non-whites. In 1971, for example, the pension of a black person amounted to only 15 percent of that of a white person (Bhorat, 1995: 599). This gap began to close, however, along with the gradual move away from apartheid politics in the seventies. In 1980 the "blacks' grant" amounted to 30 percent of the grant for whites; in 1990, 63 percent; and in 1993, 85 percent (Bhorat, 1995: 600). Limited fiscal elbow-room caused a strong reduction in the real pensions of whites in order to compensate for this rise. In 1980, white pensions accounted for more than 30 percent of the average wage, compared to only 15.5 per cent by 1993 (Van der Berg, 1997: 488).

Critics point out that this system reflects the historic needs of the poor whites to a large extent (Van der Berg, 1997). They allude in particular to the lack of public unemployment insurance. Unemployment among whites used to be rare, and limited transfers were thus adequate under apartheid. As current unemployment rates are very high, and as not even half of the population are covered by some or other form of private insurance against unemployment, the most vulnerable people are left dependent upon other forms of social assistance. These types of aid do not reach all poor people; for example, the unemployed who are under the pensionable age and who have no children under eight receive little or no support. As a consequence, the disability grant is the last hope for many, even if they are not medically unfit.

The situation is even worse in respect of access to credit structures. Banks do not lend money to people with a low income. Only a third of those interviewed can borrow R200 on short notice. People consequently often make use of usury practices. To utilise such services, in order to borrow R50, one must be able to return double that amount in the next week. The limited numbers of people who obtain credit are thus burdened with debt. Hence, it is necessary to plan ahead for large expenses, such as possible medical fees, or school fees, in detail. A poor woman, 43 years old, noted: "Everyone is trying. With the money left once rent, electricity and water are deducted, you can only buy food. There is nothing left to save. (…) People live from hand to mouth".

This has serious consequences for a number of survival strategies. Several interviewees engaged, for example, in small-scale agricultural activities near their homes. In their

gardens they typically had a vegetable patch, as well as some fruit trees or perhaps a number of chickens. Most of them used the resulting food for their own consumption; some sold the surplus, or gave it to friends. Such forms of urban agriculture, however, can play only a modest role for the poorest of the poor, as they do not have the money to buy additional materials or arable land (Rogerson, 1998). The same problem applies to flea markets, where a large number of whites gain an extra income by selling goods, from home-made rusks and fresh yoghurt to embroidery and woodwork. For the interviewed poor, however, this was difficult, as the "farmers' market" in Bloemfontein is too far out of the CBD for those who do not own (or have use of) a motor vehicle. Furthermore, start-up capita/is needed for the initial production of most of these products. As a consequence, most of the observed survival strategies were aimed at the limitation of expenditure rather than at increasing the level of income, often leading to a decrease in the quality of life.

In this respect, the most harmful strategies were those associated with a change in eating habits. First, the quality of the food dropped, often during a month when other important expenses were due to be settled. If the drop in quality was not sufficient, the quantity of the food was also reduced. A social worker noted:

> "I know many white families where the parents do not eat in the morning and in the evening. If there is food, it is for the children. Many eat only once a day. Because there is no more food".

A poor woman, 41 years old, remarked:

> If there is no food in the house, and the children come from school in the afternoon, then you must give them the food you got [from the welfare organisation]. Then there is nothing to eat in the evening! Nothing! Then you must go and look for food so that your children can get at least a little something in their stomachs. [...] I must see that my husband and children have food. Then I am happy. I do not need to eat.

Material Capital

A third form of capital, so-called material capital, includes the consumer goods that are available to the individual, such as a car, a television, a radio, a telephone or--presumably the most important of all--a house. In the RDP, the ANC promised to subsidise the construction of one million extra houses within five years. This number has not been achieved. In Bloemfontein, for example, only 386 socalled RDP houses were built between 1994 and 1998 (Marais and Krige, 1999: 126). This situation has subsequently improved dramatically, although the slow initial development of the process placed high pressure on the housing market, which is still felt to this day. As the subsidy was not sufficient for the completion of a whole house, a complementary loan was necessary. Consequently, households needed some degree of credit-worthiness with banks, causing further exclusion of the poorest (Marais and Krige, 1999). As a result, the pressure on sub-economic municipally owned housing increased. The increased (post-apartheid-era) accessibility of the housing system to non-whites has exacerbated the vulnerability of the poor whites, who were traditionally settled in such housing in great numbers.

Many of them are now forced to seek other accommodation. A social worker observed:

> People come here. Where must they go? There is no sub-economic housing. We cannot help them. Most houses of the municipality are for blacks. (...) Low-income

housing is only for blacks. Four years ago, I could still write a letter to the municipality, stating this family's situation is such and such, and so many children. Please help them with housing. Then they got a house immediately. But now, now I don't waste my time any more. They say there are people who have a greater need for housing. Black people as well. Among blacks there is also a housing shortage. (...) The low-income housing which was reserved for whites is now also given to the blacks. These small houses were built specifically for poor whites.

The result is that most of the poor whites have to seek homes in the private housing sector. However, it is difficult to buy a house without the aid of creditors. Properties can be relatively cheap, but they are only available to those who have cash in hand. Just four of the 24 interviewees were owners; the rest rented their houses. As fewer whites were able to find social housing, while a rising number were in need of it, and as a result of the influx of blacks in the former exclusively white city, the demand in the cheap private renting sector rose. This situation was exploited, with rent rising substantially. For example, a single room in an apartment block could cost up to R500 a month. As a result, many poor whites came up with alternatives. Some households currently live in a caravan in the garden of a friend or acquaintance, or even in a self-made construction of metal sheets and boxes. Others live in someone's garage or back room. Two families can choose to rent one fiat, or if necessary, just one room. Nevertheless, the first white homeless have become an observable phenomenon, especially in bigger cities such as Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg.

Once people are housed, other elements of material capital come into play, such as access to water and electricity. The majority of the white neighbourhoods were connected to the municipal grid, but the problem is that defaulters are immediately cut off from their supply (Bond, 1999), which results in illegal practices such as tapping of electricity or water without paying. Non-collective consumer goods can also be important with regard to a person's vulnerability. Only seven of the 24 interviewees owned a car, while more than half of the interviewees did not have access to any form of private telephone. Both can be important when applying for a job, or in the case of an emergency. Other goods may be important as well. One person found that her children needed a television in order to do well at school. Another mentioned that only one plate of his stove functioned; this implied that much more time was needed for cooking.

Personal Capital

Personal capital is a twofold concept. On the one hand, the notion includes one's level of education. In South Africa, inequitable access to schooling historically guaranteed better employment opportunities for the white population. Racial quotas limited the access of Africans to secondary education, and that of coloureds and Indians to higher education (James and Lever, 2001). Facing national and international protests, the late apartheid government increased the amount of expenditure on the education of non-whites. Nevertheless, in 1994, the per-child ratio of government spending on schooling for whites versus Africans was still 5:1 (Moll, 1996; in O'Connell and Birdsall, 2001: 285). Since the demise of apartheid, non-whites have gained access to every level of education, and to the former "white quality" schools. As a result, on average, blacks are better educated than in the past, although statistically, the likelihood of having finished secondary or higher education is still lower than in the case of whites (Statistics South Africa, 2005: 52).

The relatively poorly educated and poorly skilled whites experience many negative effects

as a result of the better educational achievements of non-whites. For them, competition on the labour market has increased significantly. Certainly for white school leavers without qualifications, it will be more difficult to find reasonably well-paid employment in a context of affirmative action. In the interviews, this vulnerability of unskilled and/or poorly skilled persons was obvious. Whereas 70 percent of the total white population aged 20 years or more have completed secondary education (Statistics South Africa, 2005), only five of the interviewees had succeeded in doing so. It turned out that the situation of these five interviewees was one of relative, rather than absolute poverty. This is in strong contrast to the rest of the interviewees and their families, who had only completed Standard 8, or a lower standard. They cannot find work, or can only find badly remunerated jobs. As a consequence, most of them live in absolute poverty.

The interviews revealed that to an important extent, financial restrictions are the cause of these lower qualifications. For most of the parents, it was really impossible to pay higher education fees. Many of them even experienced financial problems in terms of primary and secondary schooling. School fees amount to R500 a year for basic training in the cheapest school. This amount is sometimes paid by the school or by a welfare organisation. More expensive schools, which are generally qualitatively better, cost significantly more to attend, and are thus inaccessible to many.

Moreover, the extra costs associated even with "'lower-cost" schools are a heavy burden, as pointed out by one interviewee, a mother, who lived with her mentally handicapped sister on a R700 grant and some limited extra income from private jobs. A poor woman, 42 years old, remarked:

> I pay R290 a month for my daughter's schooling. I have applied for a bursary. Then I will no longer have to pay. (...) But when something happens at school for which they must pay, then I just pay. (...) I must also buy the school material. Pens, erasers, rulers, paper. Schoolbooks are very expensive as well. All this costs approximately R200 to R300 a year. (...) I must save so that I can pay this in January. Sometimes I have to buy less food. But it is difficult to say no. I do not know in what direction she is going. Soon she will have her matric farewell. I had to pay R200 for that".

Because not everyone can invest such a large part of the monthly budget in a school career, most parents opt for the cheapest schools, especially if there are more school-going children. These are often schools with high learner-teacher ratios, where teachers have less time to pay attention to pupils with fewer abilities, and those who have lagged behind in the learning process. In this context, it is not easy to motivate poor children to obtain their school-leaving certificate. They frequently feel guilty about the high expenses for schooling and prefer to leave school at an early stage and to seek a job, as their friends do. Over the short term, this perhaps alleviates some of the financial burdens on the family; but over the longer term it is detrimental to the labour capacity of these youths and perpetuates the problem of poverty rather than solving it.

The second significant component of a person's personal capital is health. Ten of the interviewees suffered from a chronic illness such as cancer, epilepsy or rheumatism, which prevented them from working. Others were still recovering from a car or work-related accident. Moreover, it is not only the health of the breadwinner that is important, as family members with serious medical problems can also prevent healthy people from working. For example, in one case, the lack of affordable care centres forced the poor parents of a mentally impaired child to stay home for most of the day.

The post-apartheid government has endeavoured to reduce medical costs for the neediest through a reduction in the price of medicines and the provision of free or very cheap medical care for specific categories of patients (May, 2001). Consequently, the use of public hospitals has increased dramatically, certainly among the rural poor, leading to over-utilised medical facilities and shortages in medical personnel. Some interviewees were unhappy about the fact that the largest government hospitals are located in former black areas. This feeling is not only related to the lack of transport, but for some whites, the "locations" are still on the other side of a psychological barrier. In addition, financial restrictions still hamper people from seeking medical care--health does not always come first. An interviewee mentioned that she could only go to the doctor once she knew, that at the end of the month, she would not need the R25 for other expenses. Individuals often have accounts that are in arrears because of a medical emergency in the past. A person whose health is most vulnerable is thus often the last to receive care.

Moreover, the health of the interviewees was sometimes affected by addictions of all kinds. On the one hand, alcoholism and drug abuse often appear to result from poverty and the hopelessness that is often associated with it. On the other hand, addiction perpetuates poverty as beer or marijuana take up part of the budget and appear to have the effect of making people accept their situation. In many cases, this is exacerbated by poor mental health. Many poor whites with financial problems are not mentally strong enough to solve these. Some find it very difficult to foresee a bright future and become depressed. In some cases this factor is so crucial that one could consider adding psychological capital to the capital pentagon as a separate component.

Social Capital

Lastly, the importance of social capital should be emphasised. We do not wish to restrict ourselves to Putnam's view, calling social capital the property of a collectivity. In our view, social capital can also be derived from the membership of a social network, whose benefits may possibly not be meant for a collectivity, but rather for a select group of people interacting with each other. This can take place at the level of individual households, the family, the neighbourhood or the state (Harper, 2002). A social worker commented:

> If there is poverty, they say that poverty comes in through the front door and love leaves through the back door. The husband often moves out and leaves behind his wife and children. (. . .) There are also people who are not married and just live together. As soon as the man has had enough, he leaves. The wife remains behind with the children. And, you know, divorces also bring about poverty. Everything must be shared. Each one gets half, but the mother has to care for the children. And the father, he does not pay the maintenance.

Evidently, poverty and divorce can simultaneously comprise both the cause and the consequence of each other. On the one hand, the risk of falling into poverty seems to be greater for divorced partners. In the case of many interviewees, both men and women, divorce had even been the direct cause of their poverty. Frequently, this happened as a result of an impulsive decision. Immediately after their separation, people moved to another town and left not only their partner, but also their friends, job and house. On the other hand, it seems that marriages in poor families are under much more stress than would otherwise be the case. Of the 24 people interviewed, only nine had a partner, two were widows, five had never been married, and as many as eight had been divorced at

least once. Moser (1998) thus rightly states that household relations constitute an important form of capital. A household can be a critical safety net reducing the vulnerability of each of its members. However, our observations often indicated that conversely bad household relations increased the vulnerability of each of the household members.

Many poor whites call upon their family for aid in emergencies, certainly in the case of housing problems. Children, for example, take their retired parents into their homes, or sons and daughters remain at home with their parents, even after having found a job. We even interviewed a couple with three children living in a very small home comprising just two bedrooms, which housed, in addition, a mother and a sister with her daughter. Under these circumstances, many people can depend on each other. Sometimes everyone is financially dependent on one housemate's wage or pension. Persons who care for a medically unfit person, for example, often survive on that person's disability grant. In sharp contrast, however, many of the interviewees had broken all ties with their direct family.

The social workers indicated that amongst whites, the provision of assistance by relatives is not as common as it is amongst blacks. Individualism is deep-rooted; solidarity is less prominent (Hyslop, 2000). A social worker declared:

> Family ties are much stronger in the black culture. (...) If the grandmother receives a state pension, she supports the whole family, children and grandchildren included. For whites it is different. Their social networks are not that strong. If a white man loses his job, his relatives won't help him.

A poor woman, 41 years old, claimed:

> "My family will not help me, certainly not now that my father and mother have died. My sister and brother are well-off people but.... Actually, I am the black sheep of the family".

This kind of individualism is not restricted to the family. Social networks in the poor white neighbourhoods do exist, but appear to be exclusive and restricted. In each case, small groups of individuals form a network and reap the benefits. These benefits are certainly not extended to the whole community. Approximately half of those interviewed mentioned, for instance, that they did not have friends with whom they could discuss personal matters. It seems to be difficult to build up social capital if poverty is spatially concentrated.

As most capital pentagons are similar, it is hard to gain any advantage from interacting with neighbours. A poor man, 44 years old, said: "The people here will not help you. If you ask people for food or something, because you have nothing to eat, then they say that they have no food either". A poor woman, 53 years old, observed: "People do not help each other here. Only my friend helps me. People are all having a tough time here. That is why they live here". A social worker commented:

> We are more on our own. I look after myself, you look after yourself. We do not look after our neighbour, even when he has no food. (...) Poor whites find that it is difficult enough to care for themselves, that they struggle to survive. The situation is totally different in the black community. They will share their last bread. That is the way they were raised.
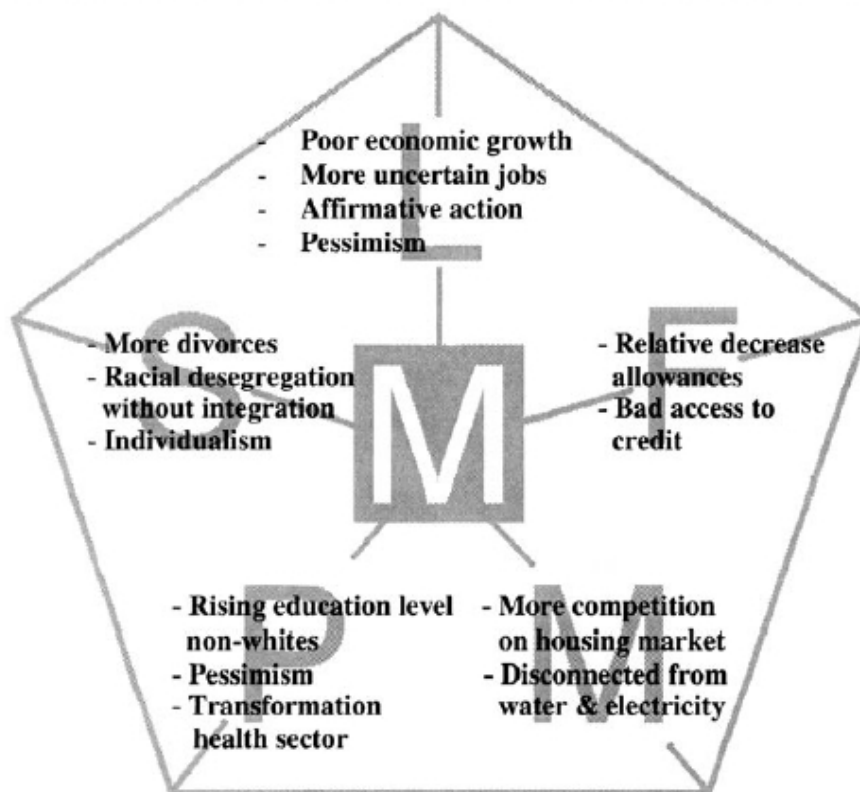
A final form of social capital is derived from membership of associations. Not a single interviewee belonged to any association. External organisations helped the residents of

the poor neighbourhoods, however. Church communities distributed clothing to the people or gave them a bowl of hot soup and some bread. Such help was mostly restricted to once-off actions, which made the recipients feel better for a time, but which had little effect in the long term.

In conclusion, the poor whites' level of social capital appeared to be low. The social networks of most of the interviewees were rather small, both within the household and the family, and on the neighbourhood scale. The sense of community in these poor white neighbourhoods was low. Many respondents felt unsafe in their own street after sunset. This lack of social capital restricted the development of survival strategies. It transpires that, for most of the poor whites, it was difficult to borrow a little money from a better-offrelative, or to get someone to look after the children, or to obtain a lift from a friend, or to ask for a private job in the neighbourhood, because they lacked a good friend, sympathetic neighbour or helpful relative.

Figure 3

The capital pentagon and transforming factors

- Poor economic growth
- More uncertain jobs
- Affirmative action
- Pessimism

- More divorces
- Racial desegregation without integration
- Individualism

- Relative decrease allowances
- Bad access to credit

- Rising education level non-whites
- Pessimism
- Transformation health sector

- More competition on housing market
- Disconnected from water & electricity

Managing Capital

To conclude this section: we have defined five types of capital: labour (L), financial (F), material (M), personal (P), and social (S), each with specific subdivisions. Figure 3 represents these five types as five different axes, each of which is located towards a comer of the "capital pentagon". These axes are not completely separate from one another, but are interrelated and interchangeable (Bourdieu, 1986). Factors influencing the different forms of capital are indicated. In the centre of the pentagon, at the origin of the axes, a sixth factor is depicted, namely the management (M) of the capital. Two persons with a similar capital portfolio, and who are thus equally vulnerable, can experience totally different outcomes. The available capital, in other words, does not determine the situation

in which the individual will find himself, but only his opportunities and restrictions (Moser, 1998).

It is difficult to make generalisations about the management of capital. Two opposing scenarios can be distinguished. Firstly, a determined group of people try to use their available capital as efficiently as possible. They only buy what they really need, and see to it that this is as cheap as possible. They seek regular jobs and undertake to do private jobs in the meantime. They consider hospital and teaching expenses as an investment in the future, hence they try to save money for unplanned bills. Secondly, there is an equally large group of people who often earn more money than those in the first group, but who find it difficult to live economically. In the opinion of others, they spend their money in the wrong way. Frequently they possess enough capital to escape from poverty; they merely need to manage it properly. These people do not always do what is best for themselves (or what others think is best for them). Most poor whites obviously fall somewhere in between these two types. They do not necessarily make more "mistakes" than other people; but in a situation in which less capital is involved, the consequences of their mistakes are more serious.

SEGREGATION AND GEOGRAPHIC CAPITAL

Segregation

So far, we have not placed any emphasis on the role of space in our analysis. At present, however, sociologists and geographers tend to criticise the dominant conceptualisations of urban poverty, in which space is considered as a static, neutral container in which action unfolds, or even worse, in which space is completely absent (Gotham, 2003). In this section we would like to point out how our capital pentagon and space relate to each other in a reciprocal way, on the basis of our empirical findings and cultural and structural determinist theories. We think it would be wrong to directly juxtapose our findings with these theories, or to select one of them as being a more accurate reflection of the true picture, as neither the idea of the poor as victims of their own bad attitudes and wrong choices, nor the image of them as victims of negative social and economic forces in a bad system, addresses the complete reality of poverty (Marks, 1991; Micheli, 1996).

It is argued that symptoms of the "culture of poverty", such as crime, children born out of wedlock, early school-leaving, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy, have their origins in structural problems, at least to some extent, starting with an unfavourable position in the labour market (Wilson, 1987). On the other hand, it is clear that single mothers, drug addicts and school dropouts face difficulties in the search for employment. As a consequence it seems that the "voluntaristic" core of poverty must be placed in a context of structural limitations, and vice versa. These arguments warrant a combination of cultural and structural theories, linking micro and macro-level analyses.

A key aspect of models of urban form and its development relates to the housing market. Within capitalist societies the housing market comprises various segments that are spatially separated from one another. Persons and families are distributed over this space as a function of their preferences and resources (Van Kempen and Oztiekren, 1998). Everyone has his own idea of what constitutes a desirable housing situation, but not everyone ends up owning (or living in) his dream house. In order to migrate from the grey city apartment to a freestanding suburban house, for instance, one needs sufficient financial resources, or certainty of income in order to obtain a loan, a car to commute,

knowledge of the local housing market, and the possibility of leaving the social network developed in the city (see Van Kempen and Oziiekren, 1998:1640-1642). As neighbourhoods consist of rather homogeneous types of houses, those persons with the least capital are generally concentrated in neighbourhoods that require the least capital and that no longer meet the preferences of those with more capital. This process leads to segregation, both of rich and poor.

In South Africa segregation has a clear racial component, in the first instance. In Bloemfontein, Africans, coloureds and whites have almost invariably lived in separate residential areas (Donaldson and Krige, 2000). As early as 1917, in a period when urban intervention was mostly a matter of *ad hoc* measures (Parnell and Mabin, 1995: 53), Bloemfontein comprised what could be considered as one of the best facsimiles of the model of the future apartheid city (Kotze and Donaldson, 1998: 469; Davies, 1981). The city's mono-racial white residential areas were located in the west of the city. Railway lines, main roads, fallow land and industrial areas acted as buffer zones against the non-white "group areas", situated downwind in the east of the city, namely Heidedal for coloureds and Mangaung for Africans (Krige, 1989; see Figure 4A).

Figure 4

Socio-economic segregation (A) and racial desegregation (B) in former white Bloemfontein in 2001
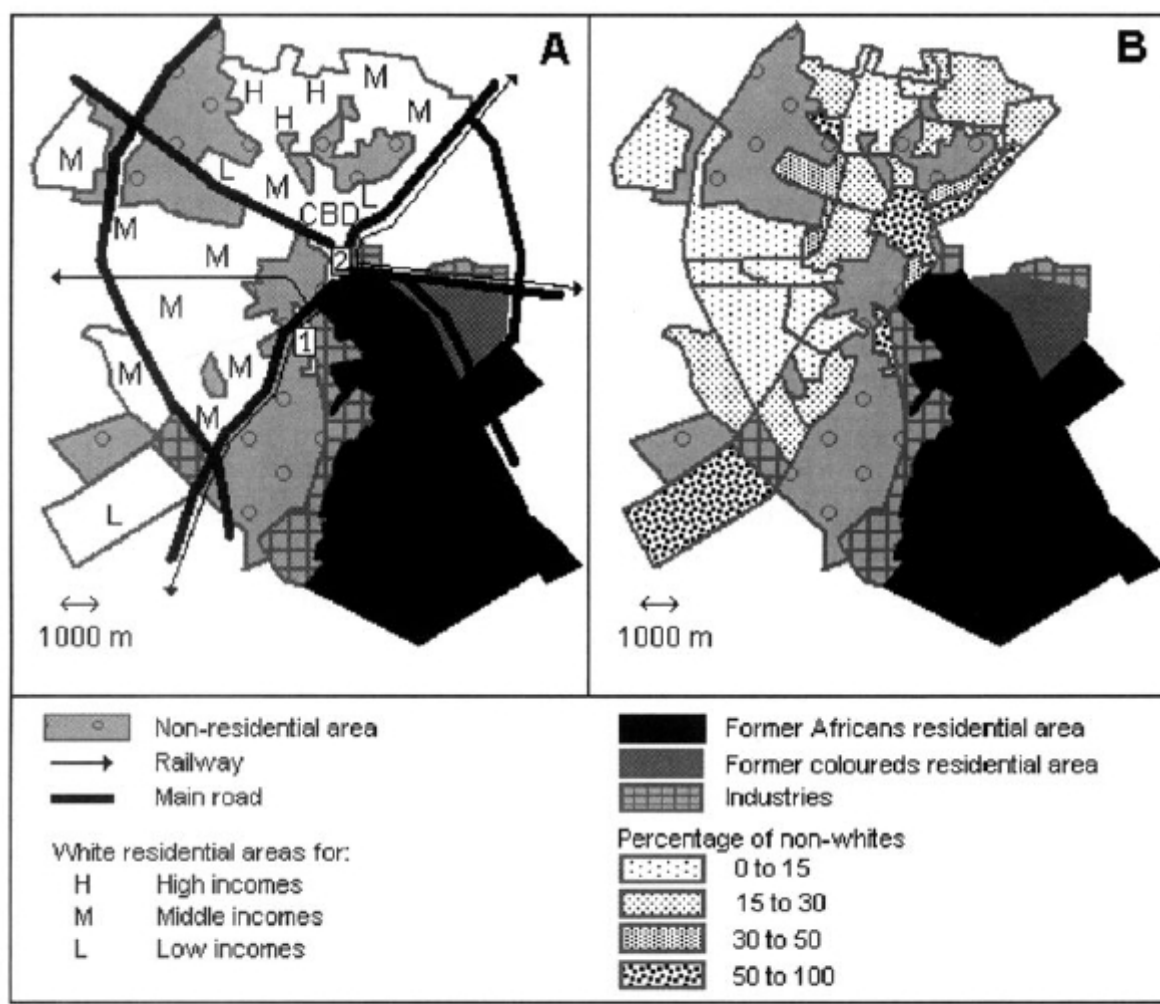
Source: Statistics South Africa 2004

It is important to note that the apartheid city was not only racially segregated; white (sub)urban space was also strongly differentiated by socio-economic status (Davies, 1981), as a consequence of the mentioned processes on the housing market and the provision of public housing by the municipality. In Bloemfontein, housing for whites with the lowest socio-economic status (or the smallest capital pentagon) was located nearest to non-white areas, whereas the wealthier groups lived further away. Figure 4A demonstrates that, in terms of the contemporary picture the situation has not changed very much.

The two neighbourhoods where most of the fieldwork took place, namely Ehrlich Park and Oranjesig, are indicated on Figure 4A by the numbers 1 and 2, respectively. Both consist mostly of sub-economic housing. Oranjesig is situated close to the CBD, but a hospital, a cemetery, sports fields and an old fort are located in between. Only a narrow industrial zone separates the area from the former black group area. The investigated part of Ehrlich Park was built in 1993, specifically for the purposes of housing poor whites. The quarter lies at least four kilometres from the city centre in an ex-buffer strip, surrounded by fallow land. It is remarkable that both residential areas are relatively isolated from the rest of the city.

Overlapping patterns of spatial differentiation and concentration on the basis of class, race or even gender have always existed (Marcuse, 1993). Consequently, the question that must be raised is not whether segregation can be observed, but what the consequences of this spatial configuration are. In analyses of poverty among blacks in South Africa, frequent emphasis has been placed on the harm done to the poor by geographic isolation and segregation, e.g., as a result of land scarcity in the overpopulated territories of the former homelands, or owing to the cost of commuting from the townships to the workplace. In our interview data, we tried to search for an answer to the question of whether this also applies to poor whites. Does space play an intrinsic role in the vulnerability of poor whites? Does something like "a space of vulnerability" exist (Watts and Bohle, 1993: 52)? Are poor people living in poor neighbourhoods more vulnerable than poor people living in middle-class neighbourhoods (Cutler and Glaeser, 1997)?

Geographic Capital

In our view, three main issues point to a positive answer to these questions. These issues are related to site (the immediate living environment) and situation (location in the city). In order to examine these issues, it is necessary to consider the mobility of the residents in these neighbourhoods. Taking public transport into consideration, a bus passes through Ehrlich Park once in the morning and once in the evening. Hence the bus service is only useful for the limited number of people who work along the route during the day, but not for people who need to shop or nto go to the hospital. Moreover, a number of minibus taxis pass through both neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, only two interviewees made use of them.

Whites often feel "demoted" if they have to use these services, as minibus taxis are the traditional means of transport for blacks. Others, particularly women, fear the reckless driving and criminality. Many poor whites thus prefer to use private metered taxis on occasion, despite the fact that a single trip into town costs at least R20 compared to R3 for a trip in one of the minibus taxis. As only seven interviewees owned a car, most poor whites walk or ask someone who has a car for a lift. This is not always provided free of charge. In the case of an emergency, up to R30 is asked for the short ride to the hospital.

For some, even walking or cycling to the centre of Bloemfontein is problematic. A poor woman, 32 years old, said: "Cycling to the centre is dangerous. At the bridge, bikes are stolen. And they assault you. And they hit you, and grab your bike. At the bridge over the railway. There you are close to the location. Yet, I am not afraid to cross it. Especially for girls it is an issue".

As the location of Ehrlich Park is more remote than that of Oranjesig, the consequences of this lack of mobility, in terms of the vulnerability of the residents, are more serious in the case of Ehrlich Park. For these residents, it is difficult to buy cheap food. Within the neighbourhood, three caravans sell basic supplies, but the products are very expensive. The low local demand for goods and services makes the presence of bigger and cheaper supermarkets on the spot hardly viable. As a consequence, people walk at least three kilometres to the supermarkets in Church Street, close to Oranjesig. For many residents the welfare organisations and state hospitals are too far away as well. The most important state hospital, Pelonomi Hospital, is situated between Mangaung and Heidedal, a place unfamiliar to most whites. As Van Kempen and Oztiekren (1998) pointed out, the increasing distance to medical facilities results in limited usage of these facilities by the residents. Their knowledge of how to access these facilities is also limited.

As in most South African cities, "Africanisation" of the central business district took place, and a new decentralised core arose in the suburbs (Jiirgens et al., 2003: 50). The latter is situated in the west of Bloemfontein, some kilometres from the old inner city. Other secondary and tertiary economic activities moved to suburban areas too (Rogerson, 2000). From our interview data, the importance of the spatial mismatch hypothesis (Wilson, 1987; Hughes, 1989) in the explanation of the low labour capital of the interviewees was not very clear, but as conveniently located employment opportunities have decreased and as mobility is problematic, we assume that the distance between the house and workplace is an important element. Transport back and forth might not be the only associated problem. The lack of access to information concerning possible vacancies and job opportunities may also be a factor.

Secondly, authors following the cultural model focus on socialisation and stigmatisation in segregated neighbourhoods. They suggest that neighbourhoods "mould" those who grow up in them into certain behavioural patterns (Small and Newman, 2001: 33). The absence of positive role-models and the recurrence of physical signs of disorder, such as broken windows, public drinking and graffiti, cause dysfunctional norms and values, constituting the "culture of poverty", to be reproduced (Marks, 1991). Divorce, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, crime, alcoholism, dependency on the welfare state and single parenthood are thus more socially accepted in such neighbourhoods than in the rest of society (Small and Newman, 2001). Cultural stereotyping based on the place of residence is just as significant, and according to Small and Newman (2001), it leads to stigmatisation and discrimination in the labour market, in school and/or in social services (Bauder, 2002).

Our interview data revealed that both processes were prevalent in the researched neighbourhoods. A poor woman, 41 years old, declared: "Everyone who lives here complains and complains and complains. They say that this is a place of bad luck. Really, everyone who lives here has been hit by bad luck. Really.(...)We just go down and down and down".

The above quotation suggests that it is psychologically more difficult to maintain a positive attitude in a neighbourhood of concentrated poverty, such as Ehrlich Park, than in a more

diverse neighbourhood. It is not only the concentration of poverty *per se* that is problematic, however; problems also arise as a result of the concentration of social problems associated with poverty. According to the majority of social workers working in the study areas, child abuse, family violence and/or alcoholism are a consequence of poverty, and also perpetuate it.

In the investigated neighbourhoods, such "deviant behaviour" occurs more often than in the rest of Bloemfontein. A social worker observed: "Alcohol and drugs are a big problem. And it makes them aggressive. At most weekends, the police are stationed there [in Ehrlich Park] permanently. Husbands beat their wives. I know wives who beat their husbands as well. They assault their children".

Some poor families with children condemned this situation of alcohol abuse, drugs and violence. One mother did not allow her 18-year-old daughter to leave the house at night. However, not all parents protected their children against the "dangers" of the neighbourhood. As a result, the children grow up in a context where unemployment, drug abuse, family violence and early school-leaving are much more socially accepted than in the rest of society. This "culture of poverty" also affects the perception of the neighbourhood among non-residents. The latter refer to Ehrlich Park as "our white squatter camp" or "smarties town". Stigmatisation and discrminafion on the basis of the place of residence do take place. A poor man, 44 years old, remarked: "It is just not pleasant to live here. (...) If you tell people that you live in Ehrlich Park, then they ask: in that bad neighbourhood?"

In addition to mobility and socialisation and stigmatisation, a third factor that explains the importance of "geographic capital" is the difficulty of building up social capital in poor neighbourhoods, as outlined earlier. Here, we wish to add to those findings by focusing on desegregation and integration. South African cities have become desegregated racially, but this has occurred mainly in terms of a oneway process whereby blacks, coloureds and Indians have entered the previous whites-only neighbourhoods (Kotze and Donaldson, 1998: 468). Nevertheless, most of the whites are still highly segregated, residentially speaking, from the other population groups (Christopher, 2001).
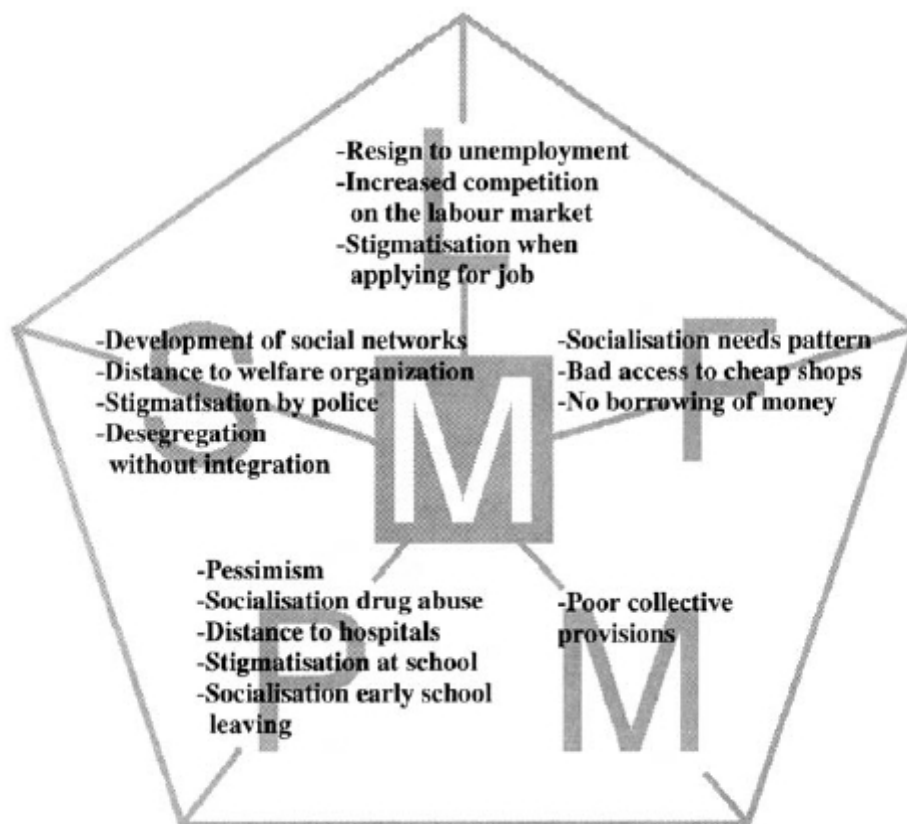
In former white Bloemfontein, large groups of Africans can only be found in new, cheap suburban housing projects such as that of Tempe (76 percent non-white) and in poorer neighbourhoods such as Louder Park (98 percent), Hilton (59 percent), Ehrlich Park (53 percent) and Oranjesig (48 percent) (Statistics South Africa, 2004; see Figure 4B). In Bloemfontein it is thus mainly the poorer whites who live in close proximity to blacks. Some are of the opinion that race is no longer that important, and that a white would help a black if possible and vice versa. However, fieldwork in racially "integrated" neighbourhoods such as Yeoville (Harrisson, 2002) and Delft South (Oldfield, 2004) indicated that integration is a slow process. Everyone basically maintains his own traditions, customs and social networks. Whites sometimes even refuse to accept help fromAfricans. Such racism can pose an extra obstacle to the development of social capital in the neighbourhoods where poor whites live.

Figure 5 summarises the findings of this section. The figure demonstrates that the spatial concentration of poverty and the poor neighbourhood's geographical position in relation to both the labour market and social services, are critical factors that can influence every form of capital, the experience of poverty, and the manner in which it is possible for poor persons to address their situation. Thus, a favourable position in space should be considered as a form of capital as well. This is referred to as "geographical capital" (Hulme

et al., 2001: 32). It is necessary to note that the level of geographic capital is much lower in Ehrlich Park than in Oranjesig. This can firstly be explained by the different socio-economic profiles of the two neighbourhoods. The concentration of poverty is more pronounced in Ehrlich Park. Space probably only starts playing a role once a specific threshold value in the concentration of poor people has been exceeded (Friedrichs, 1997). Secondly, it is necessary to consider the physical environment. The houses in Oranjesig are older than those in Ehrlich Park, but their floor area is larger. Besides, there is more (and greener) space between the houses in Oranjesig. Probably the concentration is thus felt more keenly in Ehrlich Park, both inside the houses, especially in cases where houses are inhabited by various families, and outside. Finally, the location of Ehrlich Park is more peripheral.

Figure 5

Geographic capital and transforming factors

-Resign to unemployment
-Increased competition
 on the labour market
-Stigmatisation when
 applying for job

-Development of social networks
-Distance to welfare organization
-Stigmatisation by police
-Desegregation
 without integration

-Socialisation needs pattern
-Bad access to cheap shops
-No borrowing of money

-Pessimism
-Socialisation drug abuse
-Distance to hospitals
-Stigmatisation at school
-Socialisation early school
 leaving

-Poor collective
 provisions

CONCLUSION

Poverty among white South Africans has a long history. In many ways, segregationist rule, and later apartheid, were mechanisms that aimed to address whiten poverty and instil an absolute, white hegemony that would ensure that poverty would never feature as a reality for the overwhelming majority of persons belonging to that cohort. Whilst the present socio-economic position of the various races in South Africa still reflects this racist past to a large extent, the transition from an economic policy based on a discriminating ideology, to one based on purer forms of capitalism introduced since the 1970s, led to a slight change in the racial configuration of poverty in South Africa. A relatively small group of blacks started to climb the socio-economic ladder, whereas a small minority of the whites

became poor.

It is thus of critical importance to note that the starting point to post-apartheid white poverty is to be found in the late 1970s and the 1980s, and not in the recent past. For example, we have outlined the way in which apartheid labour policies were structurally adapted from the 1970s on; how white social allowances were reduced in real terms; and how the liberalisation of the housing market affected the housing position of poorer whites. In the late apartheid years, the government spent more money on the education of blacks and the white population started to embrace consumerism and individualism, rather than the broader apartheid project, as Hyslop (2000) pointed out. Structural changes in the economic, social and cultural life of white South Africans in the late 1970s and 1980s thus affected their vulnerability to poverty, in terms of all five defined types of capital. Processes after 1994 (affirmative action, the changed provisions in respect of social allowances, further liberalisation of the housing market, health and education policy, desegregation, etc.) accelerated this development.

It was demonstrated that these changes were further exacerbated by spatial processes. The existence of a "space of vulnerability" can be partly explained on the basis of the location of a residential area within the rest of the city. The accessibility of retail trade, welfare organisations and hospitals posed a problem in many cases, owing to distance and the lack of mobility of the interviewed poor whites. Secondly, the socialisation of action patterns and values seemed, *inter alia,* to lead to resignation to unemployment, early school-leaving and a general pessimistic mood. This, to a large extent, was responsible for the stigmatisation of the area and its residents by the rest of the city. The presence of many poor people living in one area also restricted the possibilities of reciprocal relationships as a form of social capital.

Finally, we would like to suggest that the vulnerability of some whites (but definitely not all) of the interviewed poor is worsened by the historic link between a white identity and a certain life-style[3]. Malherbe's (1932) "economic standard of living that (...) a white man should maintain by virtue of his white skin" is still relevant for some. This is important with regard to the situation of poor whites, as they, and the better-off whites, do not compare their situation with that of their black countrymen who, on average, are much worse off, but with that of other members of the white community in South Africa, both previously and at present. In this respect, we could argue that "whiteness" is still associated with normal, comfortable lives, both by those whites who find themselves to be poor and those who are not poor. White people are not supposed to be poor; they shouldn't have to use "black taxis"; they prefer to do "white work"; they do not like to go to the "black hospital"; and their children, like themselves, should not befriend blacks. It is perhaps in this respect that white poverty is different from elsewhere, in that the inability of some of the poor to reconstruct their own understanding of whiteness, hampers their ability to access a range of forms of capital which, although they might not totally address their poverty as a whole, could nevertheless provide mechanisms to enable poor whites to deal with their current predicament.

NOTES

gratefully acknowledged. The usual disclaimers apply. Versions of this paper were presented at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, 30 August-2 September 2005, London, and the Conference of the Society of South African Geographers, 7-9 September 2005, Cape Town.

2. At the time when the fieldwork for this study was conducted, we were not aware of the studies of du Plessis (2004), Guillaume and Teppo (2002), as well as Teppo (2004).

3. We hope to elaborate this point in a forthcoming article.

REFERENCES

Aliber, M., 2003: Chronic poverty in South Africa: incidence, causes and policies, *World Development,* 31 (3), 473-490.

Bane, M.J. and Ellwood, D.T., 1985: Slipping into and out of poverty: the dynamics of spells, *Journal of Human Resources,* 21(1), 1-23.

Bauder, H., 2002: Neighbourhood effects and cultural exclusion, *Urban Studies,* 39(1), 85-93.

Bhorat, H., 1995" The South African social safety net: past, present and future, *Development Southern Africa,* 12(4), 595-604.

Bond, P., 1999: Basic infrastructure for socio-economic development, environmental protection and geographical desegregation: South Africa's unmet challenge, *Geoforum,* 30(1), 43-59.

Bond, P., 2003: *South Africa and global apartheid, continental and international policies and politic,* Address to the Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Nordic Afrika days, Uppsala, Zweden, available online at 130.238.24.99/webbshop/epubl/dp/dp25.pdf.

Bottomley, J., 1992: The Orange Free State and the rebellion of 1914: the influence of industrialisation, poverty and poor whiteism, in Morell, R., *White but Poor- Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940.* University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, pp. 29-39.

Bourdieu, P., 1986: The forms of capital, in Richardson, J.G. (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* Greenwood Press, New York, pp. 241-260.

Christopher, A.J., 1998: (De)segregation and (dis)integration in South African metropolises, in Musterd, S. and Ostendorf, W. (eds), *Urban Segregation and the Welfare State, Inequality and Exclusion in Western Cities,* Routledge, London and New York, pp. 223-237.

Christopher, A.J., 2001: Urban segregation in post-apartheid South Africa, *Urban Studies,* 38(3), 449-466.

Crankshaw, O., 1996: Changes in the racial division of labour during the apartheid era, *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 22(4), 633-656.

Cutler, D.M. and Glaeser, E.L., 1997: Are ghettos good or bad'?. *Quarterly Journal of*

Economics, 112(3), 827-872.

Davies, R.J., I981" The spatial formation of the South African city, *Geojournal* Supplementary Issue 2, 59-72.

Donaldson, R., and Krige, S., 2000: *Dynamics and Inertia of the post-Apartheid City,* available online at http://impuls.kulak.ac.be/south and5Fafrica/Mod3_city.asp.

Du Plessis, I., 2004: Living in "Jan Born": making and imagining lives after apartheid in a council housing scheme in Johannesburg, *Current Sociology,* 52(5), 879-908.

Freund, B., 1992: The poor whites: a social force and a social problem in South African history, in Morell, R., *White but poor, essays on the history of poor whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940,* University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, pp. xm-xxm.

Friedrichs, J., 1997: Context effects of poverty neighbourhoods on residents, in Vestergaard, H. (ed.), *Housing in Europe,* Statens Byggeforskningsinstitut, H6rsholm, pp. 141-160.

Giliomee, H., 2002: "Wretched folk, ready for any mischief': The South-African state's battle to incorporate poor whites and militant workers, 1890-1939, *Historia,* 47(2) 601-653.

Giliomee, H., 2003: *The Afrikaners; Biography of a people,* Tafelberg Publishers Limited, Cape Town.

Gotham, F.G., 2003: Towards an understanding of the spatiality of urban poverty: the urban poor as spatial actors, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 27(3), 723-737.

Guillaume, P. and Teppo, A., 2002: La privatisation du destin, Afrikaner, pauvre et urbain dans l'Afrique du Sud post-apartheid, *Politique Africaine,* 85(1), 123-132.

Harper, S., 2002: The measurement of social capital in the United Kingdom, Office for national statistics, available online at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/52/2382339.pdf.

Harrisson, K., 2002: Less may not be more, but it still counts; the state of social capital in Yeoville, Johannesburg, *Urban Forum,* 13(1), 67-83.

Hughes, M.A., 1989: Misspeaking truth to power: a geographical perspective on the "underclass" fallacy, *Economic Geography,* 65(3), 187-207.

Hulme, D. and Shepherd, A., 2003: Conceptualizing chronic poverty, *World Development,* 31(3), 403-423.

Hulme, D., Moore, K. and Shepherd, A., 2001: *Chronic poverty: meanings and analytical frameworks,* Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Working Paper 2.

Hyslop, J., 2000: Why did Apartheid's supporters capitulate? "Whiteness", class and consumption in urban South Africa, 1985-1995, *Society in Transition,* 31(1), 36-44.

James, W., and Lever, J., 2001: The second republic: Race, inequality, and democracy in South Africa, in Hamilton, C.V., Hunley, L., Neville, A., Alexander, N.,Guimaus A.S.A. and

James, W. (ed), *Beyond Racism: Race and Inequality in Brazil, South Africa and the United States,* Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, pp. 29-61.

Jürgens, U., Marais, L., Barker, C. and Lombaard, M., 2003: Socio-demographic transformation in the Bloemfontein inner-city area, *Acta Academica Supplementum,* 2003(1), 34-54.

Klasen, S., 2000: Measuring poverty and deprivation in South Africa, *Review of Income and Wealth,* 46(1), 33-58.

Kotze, N. and Donaldson, S.E., 1998: Residential segregation in two South African cities: a comparative study of Bloemfontein and Pietersburg, *Urban Studies,* 35(3), 467-477.

Krige, S., 1989: Apartheidsbeplanning in die Bloemfontein-Botshabelo-Thaba Nchu-streek, Suid-Afrika, *South African Geographer,* 17(t-2), 76-96.

Krige, S., 1998: The challenge of dismantling spatial patterns constructed by apartheid in the Bloemfontein-Botshabelo-Thaba Nchu region, *Acta Academica Supplementum,* 1998(1), 174-218.

Lester, A., Nel, E. and Binns, T., 2000: South Africa's current transition in temporal and spatial context, *Antipode,* 32(2), 135-151.

Lok-Dessallien, R., I999: *Review of Poverty Concepts and Indicators,* available online at *http:/www.undp.org/povertylpublications/pov_red/Review* of Poverty Concepts.pdf.

Maharaj, B. and Narsiah, S., 2002: From Apartheid apologism to post-apartheid neo-liberalism: paradigm shifts in South African urban geography, *South African Geographical Journal,* 84(1), 88-97.

Malherbe, E.G., 1981: *Never a Dull Moment,* Timmins Publishers, Cape Town.

Marais, L. and Krige, S., 1999: Post-apartheid housing policy and initiatives in South Africa, reflections on the Bloemfontein-Botshabelo-Thaba Nchu Region, *Urban Forum,* 1(2), 116-136.

Marcuse, P., 1993: What's so new about divided cities?, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 17(3), 355-365.

Marks, C., 1991: The urban underclass, *Annual Review of Sociology,* 17, 445-466.

Martin, G., 1999: L'affirmative action dans la fonction publique Sud-Africaine, *Revue Tiers Monde,* 159, 625-638.

Massey, D.S. and Denton, N.A., 1993: *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London.

May, J., 1998: The nature and measurement of poverty and inequality, in May, J. (ed.), *Poverty and inequality in South-Africa,* Final Report prepared for the Office of the Executive Deputy President and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality, pp. 17-45.

May, J., 2001: Meeting the challenge? The emerging agenda for poverty reduction in post-Apartheid South Africa, in Wilson, F., Kanji, N. and Braathen, E., *Poverty reduction. What Role for the State in Today's Globalized Economy?* Zed Books, London, New York, pp. 302-325.

Micheli, G.A., 1996: Downdrift: provoking agents and symptom-formation factors in the process of impoverishment, in Mingione, E., *Urban Poverty and the Underclass: a Reader,* Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, pp. 41-63.

Moser, C.O.N., 1998, The asset vulnerability framework: reassessing urban poverty reduction strategies, *World Development,* 26(1), 1-19.

Murray, C., 2000: Changing livelihoods: the Free State, *African Studies,* 59(1), 115-142.

O'Connell, L. and Birdsall, N., 2001: Race, human capital inequality and income distribution, in Hamilton, C.V., Hunley, L., Neville, A., Alexander, N., Guimaus, A.S.A. and James, W. (eds), *Beyond Racism: Race and Inequality in Brazil, South Africa and the United States,* Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, pp. 275-321.

Oldfield, S., 2004: Urban networks, community organising and race: an analysis of racial integration in a desegregated South African neighbourhood, *Geoforum,* 35, 189-201.

Parnell, S. and Mabin, A., 1995: Rethinking urban South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 21(1), 39-6•.

Peet, R., 2002: Ideology, discourse, and the geography of hegemony: from socialist to neoliberal development in post-apartheid South Africa, *Antipode,* 34(1), 54-84.

Piachaud, D., 2002: *Capital and the Determinants of Poverty and Social Exclusion,* Centre for the analysis of social exclusion, London School of Economics, CASE paper 60.

Rogerson, C.M., 1998: Urban agriculture and urban poverty alleviation: South African debates, *Agrekon,* 37(2), 171-188.

Rogerson, C.M., 2000: The economic and social geography of South Africa: progress beyond apartheid, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie,* 91(4), 335-346.

Roos, N., 2003: The Second World War, the Army Education Scheme and the 'Discipline' of the white poor in South Africa, Workshop on South Africa in the 1940s, Southern African Research Centre, Kingstonm September.

SABC, 2004: Mbeki to study data on "white poverty", available at www.amren.com/mtnews/achieves/2004/10mbeki to study.php.

Schuermans, N., 2004, Een geografische analyse van armoede bij blanken in Bloemfontein, Zuid-Afrika, Master's Thesis, K.U. Leuven, Heverlee.

Seekings, J., 2000: Introduction: Urban studies in South Africa after apartheid, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 24(4), 832-840.

Sen, A., 1981: *Poverty and Famines: an essay on Entitlement and Deprivation,* Oxford University Press, Delhi.

Small, M.L. and Newman, K., 2001: Urban poverty after the truly disadvantaged: the rediscovery of the family, the neighborhood and culture, *Annual Review of Sociology,* 27, 23-45.

Smith, D.M., 1999: Social justice and the ethics of development in post-apartheid South Africa, *Ethics, Place and Environment,* 2(2), 157-177.

Statistics South Africa, 1996: *October Household Survey, 1996,* Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa, 2001: *The People of South Africa Population Census, 1996, Key findings: Human Development Index,* Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa, 2004: *Labour Force Survey, September 2004.* Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Swart, S., 2000: "Desperate men": the 1914 rebellion and the politics of poverty, *South African Historical Journal,* 42, 161-175.

Teppo, A.B., 2004: *The Making of a Good White: A Historical Ethnography of the Rehabilitation of Poor Whites in a Suburb of Cape Town,* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Helsinki, Helsinki.

Townsend, P., 1993: *The International Analysis of Poverty,* Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire.

UNDE 2003: *South African human development report 2003,* Oxford University Press, New York.

Van der Berg, S., 1997: South African social security under apartheid and beyond, *Development Southern Africa,* 14(4), 481-503.

Van der Berg, S., 2003: *Poverty in South Africa--An Analysis of the Evidence,* Southern African Regional Poverty Network Working Paper, available online at *http:l/www.sarpn.org.zaldocuments/dOOOO7271P801-Poverty_SA_vd*Berg.pdf.

Van Kempen, R. and 0ziiekren, A.S., 1998: Ethnic segregation in cities: new forms and explanations in a dynamic world, *Urban Studies,* 35(10), 1631-1656.

Visser, G., 2003: Unvoiced and invisible: on the transparency of white South Africans in post-apartheid geographical discourse, *Acta Academica Supplementum* (1), 220-244.

Wacquant, L., 1999: Urban marginality in the coming millennium, *Urban Studies,* 36(10), 1639-1647.

Watts, M.J. and Bohle, H.G., 1993: The space of vulnerability: the causal structure of hunger and famine, *Progress in Human Geography,* 17(1), 43-67.

Whiteford, A. and Van Seventer, D., 1999: *Winners and Losers: South Africa's Changing Income Distribution in the 1990s,* WEFA Southern Africa, Pretoria.

Wilson, W.J., 1987: *The Truly Disadvantaged,* Chicago University Press, Chicago.

Woolard, I., 2002: *An overview of poverty and inequality in South-Africa,* Working Paper, DFID (SA), available online at *http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/e0000006/index.php.*

Worden, N., 1994: *The Making of the Modern South Africa; Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid,* Blackwell, Oxford, Cambridge.

World Bank, 1990: *World Development Report 1990: Poverty,* Oxford University Press, New York.

World Bank, 2000: *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking poverty,* Oxford University Press, New York.

Yapa, L., 1996: What causes poverty?: a postmodern view, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 86(4), 707-728.

Yapa, L., 2002: How the discipline of geography exacerbates poverty in the Third World, *Futures,* 34, 33-46.