

Access to Higher Education: race, resources and social exclusion

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Access to higher education is widely seen as a matter of importance. The form that the issue of access takes varies widely. In current debates in the US, race-sensitive admissions - "affirmative action" - are in the forefront. In South Africa, race is also paramount, but so is poverty. In some European countries, attention is focussed on access by ethnic minorities, while in others the concern is with class. In the United Kingdom there has been celebration of improved access by gender, but a growing concern about exclusion by socioeconomic group.

My argument in this paper is that, although these widely varied contexts are certainly important, there are also underlying similarities. My point of departure is an aspect of William G Bowen and Derek Bok's study of race sensitive admission policies as they have been applied in selective colleges and universities in the US. Bowen and Bok argue that a major impediment to African Americans' realization of potential to succeed in higher education is a lack of "inherited intellectual capital", defined as "the educational attainment of parents and grandparents". I generalize this concept through comparing the situation in the US with the emerging debate around social exclusion in higher education in the United Kingdom, and the very difficult issues facing universities in contemporary South Africa.

My key point, which is an expansion of Bowen and Bok's case for the importance of intellectual capital, is that access to higher education is greatly affected by the assets available to prospective students. I understand assets to include both wealth (property, savings and income) and the social capital that is represented by the quality of the home environment, parents' educational level and the quality of schooling.

These different kinds of assets are interconnected in ways that are often specific to local circumstances. In the US, the quality of schooling is directly linked to wealth through property taxes, and property values are linked to race through long-standing ways in which property markets are managed. In South Africa, the distribution of social capital is still overwhelmingly determined by the legacy of keystone apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act - aspirant university students will often come from families with little by way of savings or income, will live in one or two room houses and will attend schools with no electricity or textbooks, will sit in classes with more than 50 pupils and will be taught by barely qualified teachers.

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Access to Higher Education: Race, Resources and Social Exclusion

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"Differences between blacks and whites in resources, environments, and inherited intellectual capital (the educational attainment of parents and grandparents) have been long in the making. It would be amazing if they could be eradicated quickly. As a result, it is all but certain that the issue of race sensitive admissions will continue to be relevant for the foreseeable future" (*The Shape of the River*, Bowen and Bok 1998: 23).

Access to higher education is widely seen as a matter of importance. The form that the issue of access takes varies widely. In current debates in the US, race-sensitive admissions -- "affirmative action" -- are in the forefront. In South Africa, race is also paramount, but so is poverty. In some European countries, attention is focussed on access by ethnic minorities, while in others the concern is with class. In the United Kingdom there has been celebration of improved access by gender, but a growing concern about exclusion by socioeconomic group. [1]

My argument in this paper is that, although these widely varied contexts are certainly important, there are also underlying similarities. My point of departure is an aspect of William G Bowen and Derek Bok's study of race sensitive admission policies as they have been applied in selective colleges and universities in the US. Bowen and Bok argue that a major impediment to African Americans' realization of potential to succeed in higher education is a lack of "inherited intellectual capital", defined as "the educational attainment of parents and grandparents" (Bowen and Bok 1998: 23). In the pages that follow, I generalize this concept through comparing the situation in the US with the emerging debate around social exclusion in higher education in the United Kingdom, and the very difficult issues facing universities in contemporary South Africa.

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These different kinds of assets are interconnected in ways that are often specific to local circumstances. In the US, the quality of schooling is directly linked to wealth through property taxes, and property values are linked to race through long-standing ways in which property markets are managed. In South Africa, the distribution of social capital is still overwhelmingly determined by the legacy of keystone apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act -- aspirant university students will often come from families with little by way of savings or income, will live in one or two room houses and will attend schools with no electricity or textbooks, will sit in classes with more than 50 pupils and will be taught by barely qualified teachers. In the UK, the substantial expansion of middle class participation in higher education over the past fifteen years has masked the problem of social exclusion. Although participation in higher education can be linked to socioeconomic status at the level of an individual street (through the use of postal codes), there seems to have been little research as to why a school leaver whose parents are semi-skilled or unskilled workers will be a fifth as likely as a contemporary from a professional family to attend a university.

Behind this variability, though, are continuities that allow a form of comparative study. Innovations in higher education policy are high risk ventures because their consequences will affect many generations of students before they can be changed on the basis of their results. The risk is particularly high in South Africa, where enrollments in higher education are plunging, where social exclusion that is the consequence of apartheid is not being reversed, and where the country's economic success over the next decade will depend critically on the availability of an adequate supply of highly skilled labour. Comparative studies can help predict the consequences of innovation ahead of implementation.

Race and Class

A first step in a comparison such as this is that of unraveling the relationship between race and class. In the US, public discourse around "affirmative action" often assumes that race is given -- a biological categorization that does not need to be problematized -- and that class is irrelevant because the US is a classless meritocracy. In the UK issues are expressed in terms of access by ethnic minorities (with race and ethnicity not necessarily co-dependent) and by "socioeconomic groups" (understood as gradations that define attitude, attainment and income). Many understand issues in South Africa to be about race, with apartheid widely seen as a violation of universal human rights as a consequence of institutionalized racism. Here, race can be taken either as a sociological concept (with "black" understood to include all who were discriminated against through apartheid laws) or as a biological category (with "African" indicating those descended from the pre-colonial population of the sub-continent). A decade into post-apartheid South Africa, issues are increasingly complex, with contested identities and race no longer serving as a complete proxy for socioeconomic position.

In his introduction to the paperback edition of *The Shape of the River*, Glenn Loury uses race in a sociological sense, taking up the interconnection between identity and socioeconomic status. Loury argues that racial justice should be pursued as a "normative concern" that "looks to broad patterns of social disparity between racial groups, advancing as an ethical ideal that such differences should be reduced" (Loury 2000: xxii-xxiii). Loury argues that the pursuit of racial justice is a "fundamental moral concern" and that counter-arguments for colour blindness, that suggest that racism is perpetuated by the continuing use of the categories of race, are "a-historical formalism" and ignore the consequences of past discriminatory practices and the ways in which African Americans have long been economically disadvantaged. Minorities in the US face the double jeopardy of racial prejudice and economic discrimination. Loury's point is that history counts.

Mamphela Ramphela also argues for policies that recognize the past history of discrimination and the denial of economic opportunities. She is concerned, though, to avoid the nominalism that follows from a fixed concept of race -- from an affirmative action that benefits an individual irrespective of his or her ability to succeed. "Affirmative action is a strategy which has no inherent moral-ethical basis. Such a basis has to be created by locating it within a well thought out and articulated equity framework to ensure the greatest good for the largest number of South Africa's citizens. The benefits of such an affirmative action programme do not flow along the contours of existing privilege, but address the needs of the most disadvantaged members of our society" (Ramphela 1995:18). Ramphela, in common with Loury, is arguing that disadvantage is cumulative and that a policies that do not recognize the burden of history will not result in equality of opportunity.

A.H.Halsey, veteran Oxford sociologist from a working class family in the north of England, sees continuing social exclusion as a consequence of poverty: "today four million (nearly a third) of the nation's children are living in homes with less than half the national average income, compared with 10 per cent when Thatcher came to power ... class remains the stubborn barrier to distribution by merit ... working-class talent has been grotesquely wasted in a educational system that has hitherto condemned the majority to failure" (Halsey 1998). Halsey's point is that simplistic access policies that do not recognize the deep polarization of British society are disingenuous.

I have found Nancy Fraser's considerations of social justice useful in teasing apart the categories of race and class in arguments such as these. Fraser maintains that race (as well as gender) is a "bivalent collective" because it is differentiated both by the political-economic structure and by the cultural-valuational structure of society. Race "resembles class in being a structural principle of political economy. In this aspect, 'race' structures the capitalist division of labor. It structures the division within paid work between low-paid, low-status, medial, dirty, and domestic occupations held disproportionately by people of color, and higher-paid, higher-status, white-collar,

professional, technical, and managerial occupations held disproportionately by 'whites' ... When viewed in this way, racial injustice appears as a species of distributive injustice that cries out for redistributive redress ... Yet 'race', like gender, is not only political-economic. It also has cultural-valuational dimensions, which bring it into the universe of recognition ... A major aspect of racism is Eurocentrism: the authoritative constructions of norms that privilege traits associated with 'whiteness' ... This depreciation is expressed in a range of harms suffered by people of color, including demeaning stereotypical depictions ... " (Fraser 1997:21-22).

This concept of bivalency helps identify the complex ways in which race and class can effect the accumulation of assets. Fraser's argument, rephrased to address the issues that are under discussion here, is this. At root (and to anticipate aspects of the argument that follows) wealth enables access to education, and to higher education in particular. In South Africa and the US, race has in the past been used to restrict access to categories of employment through formal discrimination, ensuring a relationship between race and income, and the accumulation of income as wealth in property and other financial assets. Today, and in consequence of continuing, if illegal, racism, individuals who are subject to demeaning stereotypical depictions will suffer harm, irrespective of socioeconomic status, and may be subjected to a double jeopardy if they also carry the weight of low socioeconomic status.

These observations may seem self-evident. But recognizing the bivalency of race and class is important in avoiding some of the errors that can flow from simple comparisons. For example (and again anticipating later arguments), Bowen and Bok show that race-sensitive admission policies are applied only in selective colleges and universities in the US - less than 30% of the higher education system. Although different SAT thresholds are used for white and African American students at such selective institutions, the threshold for African American applicants is significantly above the national average: successful applicants are a minority of a minority.

In South Africa, in contrast, less than 10% of Senior Certificate candidates qualify for consideration of admission to any university.^[2] If US-style race sensitive admission policies had been applied in favour of black applicants from the mid-1980s (when some South African universities began to apply explicit equity policies), higher education would have remained overwhelmingly white, continuing the disproportionate privilege that followed from apartheid's affirmative action in favour of South Africa's socioeconomically privileged white minority. Instead, liberal universities in South Africa admitted black students on the basis of measures of their potential to succeed (rather than demonstrated success), coupling this with full financial support. In effect, such "alternative admissions" policies combined consideration of race and class, and an easy comparison with US "affirmative action" is misleading.

The situation is different again in the United Kingdom. Here, considerable progress has been made in the recruitment of ethnic minorities in higher education, and some minorities are now over-represented in relation to their proportionate demographic profiles. In addition, the proportion of young adults entering higher education has doubled over the last fifteen years. This has prompted a "class-blind" approach to higher education policy planning, and it has only been comparatively recently that attention has shifted to social exclusion. This shift in attention has shown that, despite the increase in participation across the country as a whole, it is as difficult now as it ever has been for a young adult from the lowest socioeconomic group to win a university place. In the UK, then, access has to be considered apart from race.

When race and class are seen as distinct factors in a complex of problems, social exclusion emerges as the general issue, and race-sensitive admissions in the US, equity policies in South Africa and socioeconomic-sensitive strategies in the UK can be analysed as specific policies.

The American Dream?

There is, though, a further complication. The United States is often presented as a meritocracy, in which an individual succeeds on his or her abilities, irrespective of socioeconomic status. In many arguments for the inherent power of new technology, this assumption is implicitly extended to the information economies of the near future. Whether Al Gore's information superhighway, Thabo Mbeki's African renaissance or Tony Blair's new economic order, there is an assumption that access to information and real-time education domains, shed of the constraints of time and geography, will enable success on individual merit and effort. This "American dream" is as alive on the new frontiers of Johannesburg and Cape Town - and Newcastle and Glasgow - as it is in the inner cities of Detroit or Washington.

If it were true that new technologies can -- and will -- bypass the chronic underdevelopment that is an abiding legacy of the last fifty years, then arguments such as those made by Fraser, Loury, Ramphela and Halsey would be redundant. In this brave new world, the complex bivalency of the passing century's politics of race and class would fold into a simpler necessity to counter prejudice on the basis of race, gender and ethnicity. An equity framework would be unnecessary, because opportunity would come with connectivity. The historical effects of discrimination would lose their efficacy, because wealth would be created on-line. The declining costs of telecommunications would allow on-line education in every home, irrespective of postal code. In short, access to education would be a matter of access to the Internet.

It is not difficult to counter superficial claims for the coming meritocracy of the information superhighway. As has been pointed out in a recent review, there is very little research that substantiates many of the claims made for educational technology and, in quite a few cases, there is a strong connection between advocacy and a financial interest in selling software and systems (Fabos and Young 1999). There is, however, a more substantial claim to meritocratic policies in access to higher education. Earlier explanations for the comparative disadvantage of African Americans in education assumed a straightforward relationship between poverty and underachievement, seemingly countering the arguments for race-blind admission policies with an insistence on the importance of class. However, more recent studies have often not found a causal relationship. Although socioeconomic status (measured by income, education and occupation) correlates with differential access to higher education, it is not at all clear that such factors determine whether an individual will gain access to higher education, or whether he or she will succeed (Jencks and Phillips 1998).

In turn, this lack of a clear causal relationship has encouraged meritocratic admission policies. In some US states, race sensitive admissions are being replaced by class-rank admissions, in which public colleges and universities guarantee a place to the top ranking graduates of all high schools. In California, where race sensitive admission policies are currently prohibited in law, the top 4% of high school graduates have the right to a place at the University of California. In Florida, the voluntarily-adopted "One Florida" plan guarantees a place to the top 20% of high school students in one of 10 state universities (CNN 2000; Healy 1999; Selingo 1999a, 1999b).

Assets

But other studies suggest that measures of socioeconomic status that take income as the primary variable may be missing the major cause of economic disadvantage. This approach privileges assets -- the accumulated wealth of a family. Modeling socioeconomic status in this way has the effect of re-introducing history into the debate, avoiding the ahistorical formalism of which Loury warns.

The consequences of deficits in assets have recently been explored by Dalton Conley. Conley argues that wealth, which is more stable within families and across generations than income, "does not fit into our vision of the ideal, meritocratic society" (Conley 1999: 14). His premise is that, in order to understand a family's class position (and therefore its well-being and the life chances of its children), it is necessary to take into account accumulated wealth as well as income, education and occupation. Conley bases his analysis on the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which has tracked families from an original sample of 5000 households in 1968. This shows that, at every income level, blacks have substantially fewer assets than whites. In 1994, the median white family in the US held assets more than seven times the value of the median non-white family. At the lower end of the income spectrum (income of less than \$15 000 per year), the median African American family had no assets, while the equivalent white family held \$10 000 in equity. For families with incomes of more than \$75 000 per year, white families had a median net worth of \$308 000, almost three times the median net worth for upper income African American families (\$114 600). Conley's question, building on William Julius Wilson's classic (1978) study, is: when does race really matter and when does race act as "a stand-in for that dirty word of American society: class" (Conley 1999: 1).

Conley's data show that, since the 1980s, the black-white wage ratio has begun to widen for all education levels, and labour force participation and unemployment differentials have also increased. This cannot be explained by educational differences, because the median incomes for blacks and whites who completed high school (but who had no further education) were \$14 881 and \$18 446 respectively. It is not because blacks save less than whites (blacks in fact save slightly more), nor that blacks have less propensity for entrepreneurship. However, there is substantial evidence that blacks continue to face discrimination in both housing and credit markets (Massey

and Denton 1993). Because of practices such as "steering" and "redlining", property values in black areas are depressed and continue to decline relative to property values in white suburbs. This limits the possibility for wealth accumulation by individual families. Because school quality is tied to the value of property through local taxation systems, this directly affects educational quality. By analysing the longitudinal data in the PSID database, Conley has been able to establish causality: "in the final analysis, several factors matter in predicting the wealth of young adults, but race is not among them ... The single most important factor for this age group is parental net worth ... The second strongest effect is that higher income earned by the respondents themselves results in an increased net worth two years later" (Conley 1999:50-51).

Attainment of educational qualifications shows the same sort of differentials as income and assets. In 1997, 14% of African Americans aged between 35 and 44 held a bachelor's degree, compared with 29% of whites. Conley argues that parental asset levels affects who succeeds educationally. For example, asset levels and liquidity affect the ability of parents to provide educational assistance for their children: in 1993, 33% of white students used a computer at home, but only 11% of African American students. Similarly, because college fees are indexed to selectivity, black families are likely to choose less selective colleges. Conley found that parental education level and liquid assets are the strongest predictors of an individual's educational attainment: "Overall, blacks do worse than whites (the result one expects from anecdotal information and summary statistics), but when the differences in economic endowments that African Americans and whites bring to the educational system are taken into consideration, blacks do better than whites in some measures and the same as whites in others" (Conley 1999: 80).

Conley's study is a vivid demonstration of Nancy Fraser's bivalent effects of class and race. Racial prejudice continues to deny black families the accumulation of assets, further limiting their ability to earn higher income and gain access to advanced education. In a vicious cycle, restrictions on the accumulation of wealth restrict the ability to accumulate intellectual capital, lowering income and reinforcing the prejudice that blacks underachieve because of "attitude" or, in explicit racist arguments, because of genetically-determined limitations. We can also begin to see how "inherited intellectual capital" can work within different forms of social exclusion. By focussing on accumulated wealth, intellectual capital can be situated as one of a set of assets, primarily located in the family, that bring the burden of the past into the present, constraining the fulfillment of individual ability. We can see that social justice may not be served by a "race blind" approach to admissions (which leads to an ahistorical formalism) or by class-based affirmative admissions (which do not address the cumulative effects of exclusion). We can also see that misdirected policies may reinforce prejudice by setting up people from socially excluded groups for failure, leading to the argument that their failure is a consequence of attitude or birth -- the bivalency of complex social categories such as race and gender.

Such systemic social exclusion does not depend on explicit malintentions. As Pierre Bourdieu has shown in his magisterial study of French higher education, there is a prevalent misrecognition of the way in which higher education reinforces the status quo in society while claiming to do the opposite (Bourdieu 1996). Jerome Bruner has seen this contradiction as one of a number of antimonies that define education. On the one hand, education serves to equip individuals to their fullest ability but, on the other, it also serves as a reproductive technique for maintaining the status quo of a culture (Bruner 1996). And Alan Ryan (1998) regards the fundamental issues in higher education as still unresolved, despite a century of debate and the radical movements of the second half of the twentieth century.

History, then, clearly does matter. There is every reason to suppose that the interconnected assets of wealth and social capital -- including the intellectual capital that Bowen and Bok identified as a determinant of success in higher education -- affects who gets access to educational opportunities. Rather than standing on the new frontier of the information society unencumbered with previous disadvantage, it seems more probable that the consequences of the past will structure opportunity in the future. With this in mind, we can now turn in greater detail to the contours of social exclusion and inclusion in higher education in the US, the UK and contemporary South Africa.

Social Exclusion

"Few people today", Bowen and Bok write, "recall the full measure of the predicament in which most African Americans found themselves prior to World War II. In 1940, most black men and women lived out of common view in poverty (measured by today's criteria). Their annual earnings were less than half those of whites. The education they received was markedly inferior in quality. African American children in the South went to predominantly black schools, in which (on average)

pupil-teacher ratios were one quarter greater than those in white schools, school terms were 10% shorter, and black teachers were paid half the salary of white teachers. The median amount of education received by blacks aged 25-29 was about seven years. Only 12 percent of blacks aged 25-29 had completed high school; less than 2 percent could claim a college degree" (Bowen and Bok 1998: 1). By 1960, the economic circumstances of blacks had increased greatly, but was still vastly inferior to that of whites. In 1965, barely 1% of law students in America was black, and barely 2% of medical students was black.

Bowen and Bok's argument is that race sensitive admission policies have contributed significantly to changing this situation, but that Lourd's conditions for social justice have by no means been met. They are supported in this by other studies that take into account the larger sector of the US population, beyond the relatively small group of applicants to selective colleges and universities. Orfield and Yun's analysis of US census data, for example, leads them to conclude that the American south is resegregating. They find evidence that the demographic composition of schools is changing rapidly, with the emergence of many schools with three or more racial groups, but with whites remaining in overwhelmingly white schools. Whites are the only group that attends schools where the overwhelming majority is from their own race. Black and Latino students, on average, attend schools with more than twice as many poor classmates as white students. "The most important trends ... are the accelerating resegregation of the South and the continuation of a long and relentless march towards even more severe segregation for Latino students as they become our largest minority ... The segregation that is spreading in the nation is not just segregation by race. Segregated African American and Latino schools are many times more likely than white schools to face concentrated poverty, which is powerfully related to lower educational results". Orfield and Yun argue that, "in a period in which mandatory state tests for graduation are being imposed, college admissions standards are rising, remedial courses in college are being cut back, and affirmative action has already been abolished in our two largest states, the harmful consequences for students attending less competitive schools are steadily increasing" (Orfield and Yun 1999).

Orfield and Yun's conclusions are supported by a study conducted by the Southern Education Foundation, an Atlanta-based charity concerned with the achievement of equity in public education. Reporting on the status of African Americans in public higher education in the nineteen US states that at one time operated dual systems of public higher education, the Foundation found that public higher education continues to be segregated in practice, with historically black colleges overwhelmingly black and traditionally white institutions overwhelmingly white. In Alabama, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina and Texas, 50% or more of all first time entering freshmen at 4-year institutions were registered at historically black colleges and universities (Southern Education Foundation 1998). In Florida, 48.5% of all entering black students enrolled at Florida A & M - a particularly significant statistic given the criticism by opponents of the "One Florida" plan that recently introduced class-rank admissions will cause the "cascading" of less advantaged applicants to a narrow subset of the state's four year institutions (Selingo 1999a, 1999b). The Southern Education Foundation notes that, while the number of black students entering in higher education in these nineteen states has grown since the 1970s, the percentage of African Americans among freshmen has remained virtually unchanged. In Georgia, for example, blacks represent more than 32% of the 18-24 year old population, but less than 24% of first time entering freshmen at 4-year institutions. In South Carolina, the proportions are 36% and 20%. The representation of blacks among bachelor's degree earners has barely increased as a consequence of inadequate preparation, unfriendly campus climates, lack of effective counseling and mentoring, and insufficient financial aid. Very few African Americans enter postgraduate programmes and black faculty are substantially under-represented in each of the nineteen states (Southern Education Foundation 1998).

The situation in South Africa today is similar to that described by Bowen and Bok for the US in general in the early 1960s, and many of the conditions identified by the Southern Education Foundation for the formerly segregated states can be found in a far sharper form in South African higher education. Problems of access and equity were given close attention by the new government's National Commission on Higher Education which reported in 1996. The NCHE projected secondary school participation as rising from 3.5m to 5.5m over the following decade, resulting in at least 222 000 students with matriculation exemption by 2005, and a further 422 000 students who could seek admission into the higher education system in general. Expanding participation would depend, the Commission argued, on "efficiency in the school system" and strategies to bring greater equity, including targeted funding (NCHE 1996). But in its reaction to these projections the Department of Education was cautious: "while it endorses the major elements in the case made by the NCHE for a 'massification' of higher education, the Ministry believes that the report's suggestion that the participation rate of the 20-24 year cohort should be increased from 21% to 30% over the next ten years (a rise in student numbers from about 800 000 in 1995 to

about 1 500 000 in 2005) should be treated as provisional until more detailed demographic and labour market analyses are available" (Department of Education 1996, para 3.4).

Subsequent trends have justified this caution. The first Senior Certificate examinations under a single education department were held in the same year that the National Commission on Higher Education concluded its work, and the results graphically demonstrated the variation in opportunity that is the consequence of years of segregation. Results had to be adjusted in all provinces and across all subjects to achieve a semblance of parity (MacGregor 1997). Contrary to the expectations of the NCHE the number of students in South African universities dropped by more than 30 000 over the next two years. This had devastating consequences for individual institutions. At the University of Fort Hare, for example, enrollments declined from 15 000 in 1995 to 5 500 in 1999, contributing to a deficit of US\$14m. By mid-1999, the Department of Education had reduced to 650 000 the NCHE prediction of a higher education enrollment of 1.1 million by 2001 (Vergnani 1999a, 1999b, MacGregor 1999).

The pattern of the last few years was confirmed by the results of the Senior Certificate examinations written in November 1999. The average national pass rate for the 511 000 high school students who wrote the graduating examination was 48.9% (with only 43% passing mathematics). Regional pass rates were highly variable, with the pass rate in the Western Cape of 78.8% and 37.5% in the rural Northern Province. Only 12.5% of finishing high school students achieved the matriculation exemption and, in consequence, only 63 725 potential new students were available for enrolment in the 36 higher education institutions and the dozen or so private providers that began their academic year in February 2000 (MacGregor 2000).

South Africa does not have the sophisticated census and survey data that has enabled the sorts of studies carried out by Bowen and Bok, Conley and the Southern Education Foundation. However, few doubt that the Department of Education is correct in ascribing social exclusion from higher education to poor schooling and the lack of financial aid in the face of poverty. In lieu of statistical analysis one account, similar to countless others that are only too familiar to those faced with equity issues in South African universities, will suffice. In the words of a black male student living in New Flats, an apartheid-era men's hostel in Langa for migrant workers: "The reason why I did not achieve my full potential in 1999 is accommodation. Could you believe that I was living in a hostel in Langa ... The hostel is designed to accommodate 16 workers, but we are more than 30 and we share six rooms and one toilet ... I did not have a chance to study because I would find everybody drunk. Bed bugs, lice, cockroaches flying all night. I had sleepless nights. My family is uneducated. They do not understand how the UCT studying is demanding. I did not get full support from my family. My father is a labourer who is earning less than R14 000 per annum. He had no chance to put me in residence. I missed the opportunity to share my difficulties with my fellow students..."

In the US, then, affirmative action policies have been race-sensitive and class-blind. Bowen and Bok have demonstrated that such policies have had an appreciable impact on widening social inclusion in upper-middle and upper income ranges, and within the selective educational institutions that comprise the top 30% or so of the higher education sector as a whole. Other studies have shown that differential between the elite and a broad underclass is widening, reducing access to higher education for people who are subject to the bivalency of class and race. In South Africa, a viable social inclusion policy for higher education has yet to get off the ground. The National Commission for Higher Education pinpointed the contributions of race and class, but predicted expansion of the system did not happen. Instead, the number of students of all races entering higher education has declined steadily, undermining any equity policy that would seek to build social capital among those who were the victims of apartheid's discrimination.

The situation in the UK is different again. In British higher education, some minority ethnic groups are well represented in higher education while white students are under represented; black African students represented at about 2.5 times the general demographic profile and black Caribbean students at 43% above the demographic profile, while white students are 7.5% below the national profile. But higher education is still overwhelmingly middle class despite an increase in participation from 14% of school leavers in 1986 to 31% of school leavers in 1993, a pattern that is Europe-wide (Tysome 1998; Weiner 1998). At the same time, the range of social variation measured by socioeconomic status is growing (Walker 1997). In the words of Diana Green, vice-chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University: "in the UK, widening participation is seen primarily as a tool of social inclusion. It describes a range of mechanisms used to facilitate greater equity in access to higher education for those who have not participated ... The results have been disappointing. The biggest failure relates to the aim of attracting increasing numbers of less affluent students" (Green 1999).

Social exclusion has always been a feature of British higher education. Nonetheless, the development of policy to make participation more representative of the demographic structure of the country as a whole is recent and hinges on the work of a national commission that reported a year after South Africa's NCHE (Dearing 1997). Studies of the distribution of students in higher education in the UK across ten "lifestyle neighbourhoods" (each strongly correlated with socioeconomic status) showed that, although participation from the lowest socio-economic groups had risen during the late 1980s and early 1990s, school leavers from wealthier neighbourhoods were at least five times as likely to enter higher education as those from the poorest areas. Once in higher education, students from the lowest socioeconomic groups were twice as likely to be studying for sub-degree programmes than students from the highest socioeconomic groups. The commission recognized that the quality of schooling and the supportive nature of the home environment are crucial to access and success, and these are in turn strongly related to social class. Its conclusions were supported by the patterns of admissions in the year of its report. More than half of the students accepted into higher education in 1997 came from the top two social classes, representing less than 40% of the population. Only 10% of students were from the families of partially skilled and unskilled workers, although these socioeconomic classes represent nearly 25% of the British population (Dearing 1997; Swain 1997).

The Dearing inquiry prompted the government to introduce performance indicators that would, among other things, track changes in social exclusion in higher education. These performance indicators were developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which reported in March 1999 (HEFCE 1999a, HEFCE 1999b). Publication of the first set of results in December 1999 cut across the distinction between "old" and "new" universities and revealed wide variations in access by neighbourhood (Goddard 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d; Goddard, Thomson and Wojtas 1999; Goddard and Wojtas 1999).

Both the Higher Education Funding Council of England and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service describe the new approach as a straightforward policy to widen inclusion by class. In the words of Brian Fender, HEFCE chief executive, "young people from wealthy areas are ten times more likely to enter higher education than those from the poorest backgrounds. We are keen to tackle this situation because it is preventing people of ability from benefiting from higher education" (Goddard 1999d). To facilitate this, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service has launched an Internet service that tracks applications to a university or college allowing funding councils to allocate a 5% premium for each student recruited from an area below the national average. Tony Higgins, chief executive of UCAS: "the forecasting and planning service can pick out exactly which areas of towns and cities are sending people to a particular university or college, compared with its rivals. It will show the institution where to focus its recruitment work, with a view to long-term social change in its student population" (Goddard 1999a).

But the way in which social inclusion is measured -- and universities are rewarded -- is somewhat more complex than these statements suggest. A key element is the "adjusted sector benchmark". The HEFCE has divided institutions into "families" with "similar characteristics and aspirations", and the benchmark is the predicted value for the institution. According to the HEFCE, "the proportions of students with a given attribute across the sector are calculated for each combination of subject and entry qualifications. The weighted sum of these proportions is then calculated, with the weights reflecting the numbers of students in each subject and entry qualification combination at the institution in question". This approach allows comparisons that are relative to a given university's established profile of entry requirements and subject areas. As the HEFCE again explains, "where the social distribution of students differs significantly from the population from which they are drawn, a movement can be interpreted as 'good' if it moves closer to the distribution of the population" (HEFCE 1999a).

The important point to note is that, in this system, access is not measured against the participation in higher education by the UK's population as a whole, but as a particular institution's success in winning students from lower socioeconomic groups, in specific combinations of subjects and entry requirements, who enter the higher education system as a whole. In essence, the new British system is structurally similar to race sensitive admissions in the US. African American applicants to selective US colleges and universities who receive preference are drawn from the highest SAT band and are therefore from an already pre-selected group. Applicants to universities in England from lower socioeconomic groups, for whom their universities receive an incentive premium, are drawn from a subset of the applicant pool as a whole, and this subset shares the characteristic of meeting established entrance requirements for subject areas. In the US, this structure of race sensitive admission policies has allowed two counter trends to exist simultaneously, which seem contradictory until one pulls apart the factors of race and class -- the proportion of African

American students in selective institutions has increased at the same time that the proportion of African Americans as a whole benefiting from higher education as a whole has remained static or has diminished. It seems likely that England's social inclusion policies, determined by the key "adjusted sector benchmarks" will exaggerate minor shifts in social inclusion (as the small number of appropriately qualified applicants from lower socio-economic groups are actively sought), while continuing to exclude a much larger proportion of students in the sector as a whole who do not meet qualification requirements because of their prior schooling. Policies such as these are a classic example of what Bourdieu (1996) terms "mystification" in higher education -- the tendency for educational systems to claim equality of opportunity while enacting policies that maintain the status quo. Such policies are an expression of Jerome Bruner's antimonies of education -- the ways in which education policies are conservative in their replication of the social order while, at the same time, progressive in their intent of enabling individuals to move beyond the confines of this same social order (Bruner 1996).

School Effects

Consideration of the contours of social exclusion and inclusion in these three different contexts leads to the question -- is it possible to make a difference? Is social capital overwhelmingly determined by the accumulated assets that define social position, such that only a few individuals can break through -- the *oblates* about whom Bourdieu writes (and of which he is himself an example)? Or is it possible that higher education policies can make a significant contribution to social justice -- the position taken by Glenn Lourie?

This question is of great concern to anyone concerned with access to higher education and with the curriculum, assessment systems and graduation rates of universities and colleges. It is of acute concern in South African higher education. Can universities in South Africa be agencies of social transformation, or are they destined to reestablish a social order characterised by massive socioeconomic disparities, in which a dominant white minority with discriminatory rights entrenched in law is replaced by a racially diverse middle class supported by a massive, and extensively impoverished, black working class? Addressing the issue hinges on the relationship between wealth -- the combination of financial assets and income that gives shape to class in the US, the UK and South Africa -- and social capital, understood here as the combination of schooling and the social environment in which it is set.

In considering the relationship between wealth and social capital, the previous discussion of forms of social exclusion directs us to the elementary and secondary school system. Conley's (1999) analysis of differentials in accumulated wealth, and the connection with the resourcing of schools in the US, linked as they are to the revenue of local property taxes, is born out by some studies of one of the more intractable problems in educational research -- the reasons for the persistent differences between test scores for African Americans and whites that underlie the logic of race sensitive admissions policies. This problem is set out clearly by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips in their introduction to *The Black-White Test Score Gap*: "African Americans currently score lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, and mathematical tests, as well as on tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence. This gap appears before children enter kindergarten ... and it persists into adulthood. It has narrowed since 1970, but the typical American black still scores below 75% of American whites on most standardised tests. On some tests the typical American black scores below more than 85 percent of whites" (Jencks and Phillips 1998: 1).

Jencks and Phillips believe, for a number of reasons, that this gap can be eradicated. One of these is increasing evidence for the importance of "school effects" -- the resources available to teachers, and the resources represented by teachers themselves. This is further supported in a study by Clifford Adelman. By applying linear regression to a data set of high school and college transcript records, test scores and surveys of a national cohort from the time its students were in tenth grade in 1980 until 1993, Adelman has found a close association academic resources (a composite measure of academic performance and content), continuous enrolment once a start has been made in higher education, and subsequent completion of a four year degree programme. There is no statistically significant association with race and only a weak association with socioeconomic status (Adelman 1999).

Adelman's ACRES ("Academic resources") is a master variable that comprises a senior year test similar to the SAT, a student's high school class rank, tested against academic grade point average to establish veracity and a measure of the intensity and quality of the academic curriculum. This last element consists of a graded curriculum indicator, comprising the quantity of mathematics

(excluding remedial courses), the highest level of achievement in mathematics, the quantity of courses in English (excluding remedial English), the quantity of credits in laboratory science, the quantity of credits in a foreign language, the quantity of credits in history, and the number of advanced placement credits. Adelman found that there is only a modest relationship between ACRES and the conventional measure of socioeconomic status. Degree completion rates for those in the highest quintile for academic resources was 72.5%, 17% higher than those in the highest quintile for socioeconomic status. Strikingly, those students who were in the lowest two quintiles for socioeconomic status but were also in the highest quintile for ACRES were more likely to earn degrees than students in the highest quintile for socioeconomic status.

Adelman's study seems to confirm Conley's (1999) argument that assets (here measured by the quality of schooling) are a prime determinant of access and success in higher education. What are the implications for South Africa? Recent studies have revealed acute problems in the quality of secondary schooling. The South African public school system experienced exceptional growth between 1976 and 1996, with the number of schools increasing from 18000 to over 27000, and the number of teachers from 145000 to 375000. During this period, there was a four-fold increase in the number of black pupils, and black pupils in secondary schools increased from 318 000 in 1976 to over 2.8m in 1996. This growth took place within the context of apartheid's education policy, with differential spending on black and white pupils (1:15 in 1992, and still about 1:5 in 1990), a culture of political opposition (sustained boycotts and endemic crises), bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption, and the under preparation of teachers in a racially-defined teacher-training system (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999a).

An overview of the quality of teaching and learning in South African schools, based on research projects carried out as part of President Mandela's inquiry into the quality of schooling (the President's Education Initiative), showed that there are critical problems in several areas. These include institutional conditions (for example, in a study of time management it was shown that in one school region an average of 170 out of 191 possible tuition days were lost through meetings, strikes, bureaucratic requirements and other factors), teachers' attitudes and conceptual knowledge (for example, a study showed that Grade 5 to Grade 7 mathematics and science teachers scored much the same as their pupils in tests of their knowledge of key concepts), and classroom practices (for example, the domination of "teacher talk", unstructured lessons, and very little reading or writing work by pupils). The report's general conclusions were that learning topics are dealt with at low levels of conceptual knowledge, tasks are set at low levels of challenge, children hardly ever read and books are little in evidence, and children hardly ever write and, when they do it is often in the form of single words or phrases; "sentences are rare and extended passages were never seen by the PEI researchers ... This learning profile remains largely constant whatever classroom strategies are employed, be they groupwork, whole class teaching, or real life simulations. In essence, learning seldom goes beyond a superficial engagement with either the technologies or substance of conceptual knowledge ... It follows, therefore, that reform initiatives aimed at revitalising teacher education and classroom practices must not only create a new ideological orientation consonant with the goals of the new South Africa. They also need to get to grips with what is likely to be a far more intractable problem: the massive upgrading and scaffolding of teachers' conceptual knowledge and skills" (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999b).

The implications of reading the report of the South African President's Education Initiative against Adelman's study of success in higher education by a representative sample of students in the US are that equity in access to higher education in South Africa cannot be achieved until the prior schooling system has been comprehensively reformed. Although this makes intuitive sense as well (and can be read as a straightforward implication of Senior Certificate results over the past five years), any implementation of a policy that were to see higher education institutions engaging directly with the secondary school system at a substantial scale would be a major shift in policy. Although there have been important engagements, South African universities have had very little involvement in the secondary school system, and such projects that have attempted to improve the quality of schooling have often been limited in scale and duration.

The correlation between the quality of secondary schooling and subsequent success in higher education has been used as an argument for the discontinuation of the remedial courses offered in 80% of public 4-year colleges and universities in the US (it has been estimated that 30% of entering freshmen take at least one remedial course: Marcus 2000). For example Lois Cronholm, former President of CUNY's Baruch College, argues that remedial courses are a misdirection of resources that should rather be used to enhance social inclusion in the applicant pool. Baruch College's change of policy was based on a study comparing the results of students from different districts showed that results correlated principally with the school attended: "we discovered that students with similar backgrounds - economically, socially, culturally, geographically - who differ

only in which high school they attend have vastly different outcomes upon graduation. We found that the majority of students from certain schools require remediation while many students from others do not" (Cronholm 1999: B7). As widely reported, this policy has now been adopted for all eleven of CUNY's senior colleges, where the present system of remedial education will be phased out by September 2001 and will be replaced by pre-admission enhancement courses (Hebel 1999)

As with other admission issues in US higher education, CUNY's policies are hotly debated. Seen from the vantage point of South Africa, one set of questions must revolve around the assumption that the educational playing field can be leveled by the point of admission to higher education -- that, by pushing correction for prior disadvantage back into secondary education, a meritocratic approach can kick in in the first year of higher education without continuing disadvantage. In other words, while it may be the case that critically important assets in intellectual capital accumulate prior to college admission, does it necessarily follow that the university experience itself does not make a critical contribution to social justice?

The Shape of the River suggest that intellectual capital continues to be built during higher education, and implies that policies that abandon remediation for students enrolled in colleges and universities may be shortsighted. Bowen and Bok found that black graduation rates from the selective colleges and universities in their study were lower than white graduation rates within each SAT interval. Grade point averages for black students were significantly lower than grade point averages for white students, and the average rank in class of black students was significantly lower than for white students within each SAT interval. Why? Bowen and Bok suggest a number of factors, including family background, negative stereotyping and difficulties in adjusting to the college environment. In other words, even those African American students who are in the top category of achievers carry the disadvantage of prior background into higher education.

Bowen and Bok make a special case for specific programmes, as an integral part of higher education, to address these issues: "the data reveal a pervasive problem. At almost every college in our sample, black students are not only less well academically than whites but are also performing below the levels predicted by their SAT scores. In fact, this underperformance turns out to be even more important than lower test scores in explaining the gap in class rank between blacks and whites. Although the reasons for underperformance are not entirely clear, successful programs initiated by several colleges suggest that the problem can be addressed effectively. Such efforts underscore the need for all selective colleges to review the performance of their students (minority and non-minority alike) to determine where systematic underperformance exists, and then to take steps to try to eliminate it" (Bowen and Bok 1998: 88).

This, though, is not the whole picture. Bowen and Bok found that, in contrast with undergraduate performance, black graduates were slightly more likely than white graduates to earn postgraduate qualifications in law and medicine, and equally likely to earn postgraduate degrees in business. In other words, by the time they have moved through four year undergraduate programmes, students who started higher education with a prior disadvantage have tended to equalize their performance. This same point is made in Bowen and Bok's now-celebrated retrospective modeling of the consequences of a race-neutral admissions policy. In asking whether black and white applicants, grouped in SAT score ranges, have the same probability of admission Bowen and Bok found that the imposition of a "race neutral" admissions policy would have resulted in black students having approximately half the probability of admission as white students "imposition of this kind of race-neutral policy would presumably take black enrollments at many of these selective institutions most of the way back to the early 1960s levels, before colleges and universities began to make serious efforts to recruit minority students" (Bowen and Bok 1998: 39). Along the way, a significant number of eminent and successful professional people would have lost the opportunity of attending the universities from which they clearly benefited greatly. They, clearly, had accumulated the intellectual capital required for successful competition in a meritocracy, but it is not clear that they would have done so within an admissions policy that insisted that all remediation be completed prior to undergraduate study.

From this review, it seems a fair working assumption that the intellectual capital required for the successful completion of higher education is gained in the home and school environment from the earliest years, that secondary education plays a critical role, and that advantage continues to be gained through the years of college and university education. And, of course, such gains in intellectual capital have a direct bearing that beneficiaries will bring to the next generation. Bowen and Bok conclude that there is a real wage premium associated with enrollment in an academically selective institution, that this premium is substantial, and that it is probably higher for black graduates than for white graduates.

Enabling Change

In ending, I want to draw together a number of implications from what has gone before. These are not intended to be comprehensive. They are also unashamedly biased towards some of the priorities in South African higher education today.

Access clearly matters. The stark reality of social exclusion in the UK is the observation that, despite a massive expansion in participation over little more than a decade, there has been only negligible change in the prospects of young adults in the lowest two socioeconomic classes gaining a place in a British university. Access also matters in America. To adapt A.H. Halsey's strictures to the US, black talent has been grotesquely wasted in an educational system that has hitherto condemned this minority to failure. But access particularly matters in South Africa, where race continues to be the primary determinant of opportunity, and where only a little more than 10% of all young adults have any chance of advanced learning. In a developing economy with low levels of direct foreign investment, massive disparities in access to housing and basic education, substantial unemployment and a growing public health crisis spearheaded by the escalating AIDS pandemic, low and inequitable access to higher education will severely limit the potential for economic development and political stability.

Comparison with the US and the UK suggests that a prime determinant of access to higher education is assets, understood here as both wealth and as social capital. It will be self-evident to anyone familiar with education in South Africa that poverty limits success in school and the ability to take up a university place. Socioeconomic disadvantage was identified as a key factor by the National Commission on Higher Education, and has been a persistent theme in subsequent government policy. However, the connection with social capital is less clear. Some policy directions suggest a turnkey approach to higher education in South Africa. In this argument, the principal access issue is seen as financial aid. Certainly, financial support is important. But recent studies such as those by Clifford Adelman (1999) and the collection of papers in Jencks and Phillips' (1998) edited volume, suggest that this is not enough. Factors such as home environment, the richness of the school curriculum, and the quality of teachers confer -- or deny -- intellectual capital which is as important as financial assets in access and attainment.

This last observation has a major policy implication for higher education in South Africa. Universities in South Africa rarely intervene in the secondary school system, and most such interventions have been research projects conducted by Schools of Education or short-lived -- and often frustrated -- attempts at remediation. Some of the work reviewed here suggests that it is time for a fresh look at the relationship between schools and universities. Put another way, universities in South Africa already have too few students. If present trends continue, a significant proportion of these universities will lose their basis of financial operation.

However, the previous pages also suggest that pushing the focus of remediation back into the secondary school system is not enough. Bowen and Bok's work demonstrated that an individual's social capital continues to be built throughout the first degree and that Mamphela Ramphele's conditions for equity are often only reached after the fourth year at a college or university. This has long been the experience in South African universities, where academic development policies are crucial if access is not to be followed by exclusion. Lyndon Johnson's well-known comment at Howard University in 1965 is apposite to South African universities admitting students from most schools in the country today: "you do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line in a race and then say, 'you are free to compete with all the others' and still justly believe you have been completely fair".

But what is perhaps most striking about much of the debate about race-sensitive admissions in the US and social inclusion in the UK is the assumption that the issue is only that of bringing the disadvantaged into the realm of the advantaged. Arguments for social justice and equity are more than what Fraser terms "affirmative remedies" -- "remedies aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them" (Fraser 1997:23). In the context of higher education, they are surely about transforming the conditions that caused disadvantage in the first place.

This issue is particularly important in South Africa, where a major objective is to move from an education system designed to protect privilege through exclusion on the basis of race to one that provides opportunity through a framework of equity (Department of Education 1996, 1997; NCHE 1996). One final set of studies shows what such a programme can look like, and the ways in which diversity in higher education not only contributes to social inclusion, but also enhances the

intellectual capital of the community of students as a whole.

The University of Michigan has recently defended a legal challenge to its long-established policy of race-sensitive admissions, a case that may well find its way to the Supreme Court. About half of Michigan's undergraduate students are from the Detroit area, and two-thirds are in-state. Since 1940, Detroit's black population has risen to about 75%, while a large number of white families have moved to the suburbs. As a result, more than 80% of Michigan's white students come from predominantly white neighbourhoods and schools -- a case study in segregation and resegregation. In a further complication - showing the intersection of race and class - the challenge to race sensitive admissions comes from blue-collar white areas, where less than 5% of high school students will earn places at Michigan, while a longitudinal study of Michigan freshmen entering in 1990 found that black and white students remained largely polarized during their time at the university (Schmidt 1998).

Michigan's defence of race sensitive admission policies is based on the argument that racial diversity has a high educational value. In the words of Lee Bollinger, President of the university, "a classroom that does not have a significant representation from members of different races produces an impoverished discussion". This continues the argument made by Justice Lewis Powell in the 1978 Supreme Court in allowing race sensitive admission policies -- that there is a "compelling interest" on the part of universities to admit a diverse student body, thereby improving the quality of education through presenting students with different opinions and teaching them to relate to students from other backgrounds (Orfield and Whitley 1999).

There has been very little research to substantiate the value of diversity in education: "most discussions about the effects of diversity are simply assertions; people with differing ideologies come up with highly divergent arguments. If a central question is whether or not racial diversity broadens the intellectual life of the university and enriches the educational experience in the student community, there are only two reliable sources: the students and the faculty" (Orfield and Whitley 1999: 2). The Civil Rights Project carried out an extensive survey at University of Michigan Law School, comparing it with Harvard Law School, and seeking to establish the intellectual impact of diversity on student learning experiences. Students reported that their learning experiences were substantially improved in diverse classes, enhancing their thinking about problems in classes, and with about 90% of students at both universities reporting that diversity had a positive impact on their general educational experience. More specifically, students reported that diverse classes helped them think differently about legal and social issues, and that exchanges in class had altered their viewpoints (Orfield and Whitley 1999).

Michigan's perspective opens a whole new area for comparative study. In the UK, for example, the performance indicators that have been developed and applied to measure diversity seem positively to encourage conservatism in the curriculum by benchmarking long established clusters of disciplines with long established admission requirements. In South Africa, there has been very little research on the value of diversity in the classroom and the curriculum. It is a frustration -- but also a challenge -- of higher education that every question releases a swarm of new possibilities.

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[1] Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at the conference of the Mellon Minority

Undergraduate Fellowship programme in New York, and to the Centre for African-American Studies, Emory University. I am grateful for comments received at both of these meetings. More recently, there have been significant developments in Higher Education in South Africa, with the publication in March 2001 of the Department of Education's National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). In many respects, the NPHE re-emphasises the earlier policies of the South African White Paper on Higher Education, and therefore the central thrust of my argument in the paragraphs that follow.

[2] The national Senior Certificate examinations are the graduating qualifications for all high schools. A subset of Senior Certificate candidates receive "matriculation exemption" on the basis of their results and, by law, only those with matriculation exemption can be considered for admission to South Africa's 21 universities. Consequently, the South African Senior Certificate functions as a filter for university admissions in much the same way as the SAT.

The term "black" is generally used inclusively in South Africa to refer to all those formerly discriminated against by apartheid laws. Subsets of the category "black" (used to establish legal categories under apartheid, and used in contemporary South Africa to monitor the effect of equity policies) are African, Indian and Coloured (people of mixed race).

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