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Racial Classification and the Census in South Africa, 1911-1996

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Abstract

The South African government has previously used racial classification as a tool in its official state policies to control its population. We examine the role racial classification and stratification has played in South Africa's modern censuses. We show that by using racial classification in their policies against racial stratification the present administration dramatically improved their ability to capture the population in the most recent census, but that it remains to be seen whether or not this change will permeates throughout the country.

> One of the most vital questions to be faced in South Africa is whether the white population numerically and otherwise is to hold its own. Distinguished authorities have given a negative reply to the question, and it is clear that the answer, if certainty is possible, can only be secured from the recurring censuses.
>
> (C.W. Cousins, Director of the Census, 1921)

Introduction

Exactly fifty years later the concerns of the Director of the Census C.W. Cousins regarding the size of the European origin population were echoed by J. L. Sadie. As late as 1971, Sadie, the leading demographer in South Africa, and a professor at the University of Stellenbosch wrote:

> With Bantu forming 69.9%, Coloureds 9.5% and Asians 3.0% of the Republic's population, the appellation of underdeveloped would be quite appropriate for a major portion of it. However, setting it apart from most L.D.C.'s is the presence of a very substantial, albeit diminishing, complement of (17.6%) people of European origin sharing the economically significant values of the developed West, among whose ranks the entrepreneurial intitiative[sic] is generated. To this must be added the growing numbers of Asians assuming this role. By contrast, shackled by the whole gamut of social, psychological, religious and cultural factors which together resolve into what is usually termed a way of life,--and our argument is not weakened by a recognition of exogenously imposed disabilities—the Coloured and Bantu populations have failed to produce the Schumpeterian

> New Men or innovators with high *eta*, or need for, achievement, in McClelland terminology, required for economic development (Sadie 1971:208).

The expanding European-origin population coincided with increased political domination. As part of the international growth of European hegemony, South African settlers became the link between the southern African region and the modern world economy (see Ross 1989; Patterson 1975). The European-origin population founded and ruled the modern South African State until very recently.

Both colonial and postcolonial administrations have taken population enumerations in South Africa. Modern South African enumerations began with the first Union of South Africa census in 1911. Subclassifying the population into races racializes a population enumeration; administrators have racialized every population enumeration in South Africa.

Census administrators and scholars have defined the boundaries of race as biological realities. In an important article Phillip V. Tobias concluded that the "concept of race is valid as long as we are dealing with groups of people; racial features are the average of a large number of individuals' features" (Tobias 1953:122).[1] Like the demographers cited above, South African physical anthropologists tended to accept the notion of race. Unlike the demographers, anthropologists may not have been directly involved in providing scientific support for the government's racial classification in census enumeration (Tobias 1985:30-32; Dubow 1995:53-65). As Saul Dubow notes, "because the changed meaning of the term was registered indirectly rather than in an explicit theoretical sense, typological models of racial difference were not consistently dispensed with" (1995:106). We suggest that racial classification in population enumeration is a tradition of convenience and that this tradition justifies racial stratification. We do not separate biological notions of race from racial stratification.

Racial classification systems assume that race refers to groups of human beings characterized by common anthropometric measurements of skin color, hair type, eye color or cranium size. When these criteria are not sufficient, common heredity is used as the determinative trait despite wide ranges of physical traits within the groups. Such topological thinking is static and based on arbitrary categories that depend on the history of social relationships, as opposed to biological relationships (Jackson forthcoming). This type of thinking characterizes the history of racial classification in racially stratified societies like South Africa. And census taking is one of the instruments that the South African state used to foster this stratification.

All societies have some form of differentiation, and this differentiating process influences what we view as the population composition. Racial classifications develop along the dimensions of physical difference. The racial classification scheme employed in the Republic of South Africa uses skin color and ancestry as the criteria. However, the biological ability to reproduce interracially is at odds with the social desire to maintain the boundaries of racial classification. Thus, the system of racial classification must be based on socially accepted criteria of difference, and biology is necessarily secondary.

Race is an ascribed characteristic and, in theory, racial groups cannot change their racial identity. However, in reality one racial group may assimilate into another; such was the case with segments of the Hispanic and Asian populations in the United States (see Ignatiev 1995; McDaniel 1995; Barringer, Gardner, and Levin 1993). In South Africa, A. J. Christopher (1994:104) notes that in the 1980s, 3,455 Cape Coloureds changed their racial classification to White and 1,827 Blacks changed their racial classification to Coloured.

We should not confuse ethnicity with race because race is a distinctly different concept

from ethnicity, and the two types of group distinctions are used differently in society, especially in racially stratified societies (Hanchard 1994; Wade 1993). Generally, ethnic identity is a way of distinguishing culturally distinct members within a particular population. Thus, English, Dutch, Germans, French (Huguenots), and Afrikaners are ethnically or nationally different, yet all have been considered white, European, inhabitants, or Christians within the official statistics of the Republic of South Africa.

How race is defined depends on the nature of the state. Racial classification is a social process used to direct social stratification. Thus, racially classifying the population is an for or against the processes of racial stratification. *If the state advances a policy of racial stratification, the use of race facilitates the administration of racially marginalized populations. If the state advances a policy against racial stratification, then the use of race facilitates the state's fight against racial stratification by providing the empirical data necessary to vindicate past misdeeds.* In this paper, we place South Africa's policies of legitimating racial classification in the context of official state policy. We examine the modern systems of racial classification in South African censuses.

Racial Classification in the Republic of South Africa, 1911-196

By 1910, European settlers had dominion over the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa (Thompson 1995:163-64). The new state was named the Union of South Africa, and it immediately applied a comprehensive program of racial segregation and discrimination, gained control over the land, and transformed the indigenous inhabitants into wage and tenant laborers.

Usually the racial composition of a population is seen as a natural and consistent phenomenon. Changes in the composition of the population result from a combination of differential fertility, differential mortality, net immigration, and racial classification. In South

Africa, racial classification has had a direct impact on the social position of different members of the population. Table 1 presents the racial classifications used in the Union/Republic of South Africa censuses from 1911 to 1996. Table 2 presents the sizes of these racial groups estimated by Central Statistical Service (CSS, and currently known as Statistics South Africa).

TABLE 1 - Racial Classifications in the Union/Republic of South Africa, 1911-1996*

Year	African	Asian	Coloured	European/White
1911	Bantu[a]		Mixed and Other Coloured[b]	European/White
1918**				European/White
1921	Native (Bantu)	Asiatic	Mixed and Other Coloured	European
1926**				Europeans
1931**				European
1936	Natives	Asiatics	Coloured	Europeans
1941**				European
1946	Natives (Bantu)	Asiatics	Mixed and Other Coloured	European (White)
1951	Natives	Asiatics	Coloureds	Whites
1960	Bantu	Asiatics	Coloureds	Whites
1970	Bantu	Asiatics	Coloureds	Whites
1980	Blacks	Asians	Coloureds	Whites
1985***	Blacks	Asians	Coloureds	Whites
1991	Blacks	Asians	Coloureds	Whites
1996	African/Black	Indian/Asian	Coloured	White

Sources: Official Census Reports and Questionnaires

* South Africa became a Republic in 1961.

** Census of the European Population only.

*** Household census only.

[a]The Bantu classification consisted of the following subclassifications: Baca, Bachuana, Basuto, Bavenda, Bomvana, Damara, Fingo, Hlangweni, Daffir (unspecified), Ndebele, Northern Rhodesian Tribes, Nyasaland Protectorate Tribes, Other Tribes, Pondo, Pondomise, Portuguese East African Tribes, Southern Rhodesian Tribes, Swazi, Tembu, Tonga (alias for Bagwamba including Tshangana), Xesibe, Xosa, Zulu.

[b]The Mixed and Coloured other than Bantu classification consisted of the following subclassifications: Afghan, American coloured, Arabian, Bushman, Chinese, Creole, Egyptian, Griqua, Hottentot, Indian, Koranna-"Hottentot Races", Krooman, Malagasy, Malay (Cape), Mauritian, Mixed, Mozambique, Namaqa - "Hottentot Races", Other, St. Helena, Syrian, West Indian, Zanzibari.

Table 2. SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION: 1911-1991

	Racial Classifications				
Year	Africans	Asians	Coloureds	European	Total
1911	4,019,066	[a]	678,146	1,276,242	5,973,454
1921	4,697,813	165,731	545,548	1,519,488	6,928,580
1936	6,596,689	219,691	769,661	2,003,857	9,589,898
1946	7,831,915	285,260	928,484	2,372,690	11,418,349
1951	8,560,083	366,664	1,103,016	2,641,689	12,671,452
1960	10,921,922	477,932	1,510,143	3,078,050	15,988,047
1970	15,339,975	630,372	2,050,699	3,773,282	21,794,328
1980	21,078,600[b]	818,380	2,686,720	5,589,660	30,173,360
1985	24,449,800[b]	821,361	2,832,705	4,568,739	32,672,605
1991	28,396,700[b]	989,620	3,285,718	5,068,110	37,740,148
1996	31,127,631	1,045,596	3,600,446	4,434,697	40,583,573[c]

Source: Official South African Census Reports for various years, Sadie (1988) for 1980, and the Census micro-data for 1991.

[a] In 1911, the Asian population was included in the Colored population.

[b] These estimates include numbers from the TBVC areas (6,401,390 for 1980; 6,084,400 for 1985 and 6,750,700 for 1991).

[c] Total includes 375,204 unspecified/others. These are excluded from the calculations in the other tables.

The political discourse about race helped forge a common racial identity of two European ethnic groups—Afrikaner and British. In this discourse, race and ethnicity were seen as distinct realities. Indeed, they served two distinct purposes. Ethnic identity was important during the Afrikaner struggle for national autonomy and hegemony. The Trek Boers were attempting to expand their dominance throughout the southern portion of the African continent. Likewise, the British Empire wanted to continue its efforts at a global hegemony, with Cecil Rhodes striving for a Unified Pan Africa under the auspices of the British flag. Hence, wars ensued between the British and the Afrikaner settlers. Nevertheless, after the two Anglo-Boer Wars, "Generals Botha and Smuts saw Afrikaners and English-speaking whites as flowing together in 'one stream'"(Giliomee 1995:191).

The modern South African system of racial classification has its roots in Afrikaner settlers' policies in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal and British colonial settler policies,

especially those of the Cape Colony. Their policies served as the basis for the racial identity and the system of apartheid in South Africa in the twentieth century.[2] However, as a doctrine, apartheid was not truly a new policy. It was merely the continued evolutionary process of the "native segregation" policy of 1910. Many of the attributes of apartheid were remnants of previous policies. For example, pass laws were first utilized in the Cape Colony in 1809, and a reserve or quasi-reserve system was initially used in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to minimize conflicts between Boers on the frontier and various groups of Africans.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa was founded. Between 1910 and 1960 European controlled political parties maintained a policy of compromise between the English and the Afrikaner ruling class. The English wanted to maintain a link with the British Empire, while the Afrikaners desired republican independence. The collaborative efforts of Louis Botha and Jan Christian Smuts were only effectively used as a response, to maintain control over non-Europeans. In 1961 the Afrikaners realized their republican ambitions when South Africa broke away from the British Commonwealth.

The first census of the Union of South Africa was conducted in 1911, the year following the establishment of the Union. Previously, southern Africa was composed of a series of colonies, territories, and protectorates--Cape of Good Hope, Orange River or Orange Free State, Natal, Swaziland, Basutoland, Bechuanaland, South West Africa, and Transvaal. In 1910, eight years after the Second Anglo-Boer War, the British government consolidated the Cape of Good Hope, Orange Free State, Natal, and Transvaal colonies under a single authority.[3] However, after doing so the British relinquished the majority of their authority to the former colonists. South Africa did not formerly sever its ties with England until 1961, when it became an independent republic. However, 1911 marks the date of the modern census that continues to be

taken.

The drive to annex more African territory for the Union continued after its formation in 1910 until 1924. This push to incorporate various territories and protectorates into the Union was headed by Generals Botha and Smuts. Their efforts were contested by various groups of Africans and some Europeans, as well as by the Imperial High Commissioner in Britain.

After the founding of the Union, there was a two-tier system of parliament, the House of Assembly and the Senate. These bodies passed the Census Act and the 1914 Statistics Act. The Census Act provided for the taking of a quinquennial enumeration of the European population for electoral purposes and a decennial enumeration of the entire population (OCS 1925a). According to section 34:

> The quota of the Union shall be obtained by dividing the total number of European male adults in the Union, as ascertained at the census of nineteen hundred and four, by the total number of members of the House of Assembly as constituted at the establishment of the Union (USA 1911:14).

As Director of the Census J.B. Moffat noted "All that is required for redistribution purposes is the number of European male adults in each Province" (Moffat 1911).[4] Again the enumeration process facilitated racial stratification and in this case gender stratification as well. The census legislators provided a context in which the discourse about racial stratification took place.

The population enumerations did not take place consistently because of financial problems and the Union's involvement in various wars. The 1914 Statistics Act provided for the

> establishment of the Statistical Council, a body appointed by the Minster of the Interior, consisting of representatives of various Government Departments as well as of members of the public who have been selected because they are eminently

> qualified to advise the Government on questions connected with the collection of statistics. The object of the advisory agency of the Census Office was to ensure that the various statistical operations were conducted in the best interests of the 'public' and that they serve practical purposes and are not merely of an academic nature (OCS 1925b).

The Office of Census and Statistics was responsible for collecting and compiling census enumerations and other statistical data. *The Statistical Council discussed the census structure and developed the various racial classifications used in the censuses.*

The first census of the Union was taken on May 7, 1911. There were three major racial classifications in this census: "European or White," "Bantu," and "Mixed and Coloured other than Bantu." The census was composed of an extensive set of racial subcategories. The "Bantu" and the "Mixed and Coloured other than Bantu" categories were each composed of 23 "racial" subclassifications. The extensiveness of these racial classifications illustrates the degree to which the notions of race, nationality, and ethnicity were confounded in the collection of census data. For example, European settlers saw the San and Khoikhoi as being from a different "race" than the Bantu-speaking people they encountered in the 1770s. In fact, this distinction continued to be a major issue among physical anthropologists well into the twentieth century (Tobias 1985; Dubow 1995:33-65).

Several national censuses in the Republic of South Africa included only the European population, or else dropped the race question and predetermined race. The 1918, 1926, 1931, and 1941 censuses were of only the European settler population. For the 1921 census, the enumerators used separate schedules for each racial group. That year, the state determined racial identity for both individuals and households prior to the enumeration.

Part of the confusion surrounding race and racial classification in South Africa is directly related to the established definition of the various racial groups. In 1950, the legislative basis of apartheid was established. Particularly important for census enumerations were the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act. The 1950 Population Registration Act defined a "'coloured person' [as] a person who [was] not a white or a native" (USA 1950:277). This effort to clarify the racial classification of "Coloured" persons led to the conclusion that "some discrepancies are reflected in the...Coloured and Bantu population figures for certain districts of the Cape Province. *This must be ascribed to apparent erroneous classification*" (RSA 1968:vii; emphasis added.)

Before 1950, Europeans were defined as White persons who were pure descendants of Europe. From 1950 to 1991, the European population was defined as "Persons who in appearance or who are generally accepted as white persons, but excluding persons who, although in appearance obviously white, are generally accepted as Coloured Persons" (USA 1950:277). The colonial administrations assumed that physical appearance was not enough to make a person White. The social context of being "generally accepted" as White was seen as being more important than physical appearance. Moreover, the effort here was to keep "White" identity separate from that of other races. Additionally, this definition of the European population is clearly designed to keep Coloureds from "passing" as White or being mistakenly counted as White. This definition for the European classification is arbitrary, and illustrates how racial classifications are socially constructed.

By the 1960 census, Coloureds were defined as "All persons not included in any of the three [other] groups," including Cape Malays (RSA 1961:v). As previously mentioned the "Coloured" population was particularly difficult to enumerate because it was composed of many

mixed-race persons. Africans were defined as aboriginal races or tribes of Africa, and Asians as natives of Asia and their descendants. Historically, the European-dominated colonial administration sought to distinguish between itself, the European-origin population, and others, the African- and Asian-origin populations, along with the Mixed or Coloured races.

The next major development in the censuses of the Republic occurred at the start of the 1991 census. Just prior to the administration of the 1991 census the government decided to abandon the collection of race-based statistics and to repeal the Population Registration Act of 1950.[5] This change in policy had an impact on the census, vital registration, and other statistics collected and produced by the government. The Act was an effort to appease Africans, trade unions and others who were the victims of racial discrimination and who wanted to eliminate racial bias. However, the director of the Central Statistical Service, with the support of some of the leading scholars in the country, decided to collect data on race even though doing so was no longer government policy. The CSS defended its decision to collect racial data on television, in newspapers, and in press releases. They said that the information was needed for demographics and statistical purposes and not political ones. "From a statistical point of view ignoring population group information can do more harm than good....It is not as if population differences will suddenly cease to exist and that the demographic characteristics of all population groups [races] will henceforth be the same" (BI 1991). The Bophuthatswana statistics branch made the same argument for its 1991 census (RB 1991).

The 1996 South African census committee decided that the racial classifications for the 1996 census should remain the same as the 1991 census classifications. However, it was decided that the category for Africans was relabeled "African/Black" instead of just "Black." This was done to distinguish between the Afrikaners and the indigenous Africans who both refer to

themselves as Africans (Adegboyega 1995). The other categories are Indian/Asian, Coloured, and White. The decision to maintain these classifications was because most people in the country recognized and understood the categories.

From 1921 to 1996 the South African government has used four broad racial categories in multiracial censuses. The usage of these four classifications was determined at a Statistical Council meeting in November 1921 (SC 1921). One of the Council members suggested the usage of a fifth classification—Eurafricans. This term had been used earlier in the 1910 Johannesburg Municipal census. However, the other council members suggested that a Eurafrican population would be difficult to identify, thus the suggestion was abandoned.

The classifications within these four categories have changed over time, but the attempt has been to identify the same four population groups—namely Africans, Asians, Coloureds, and Europeans. In some cases small groups within these classifications were officially shifted. For example, Syrians were included under "Asiatics" in 1921, but were switched to "European" thereafter. The most dynamic classification was that which was ascribed to the African population. It changed from Bantu to Natives to Bantu to Blacks and finally to African/Black over almost a century of enumeration. The other dynamic aspect to this era in South Africa's history is that of the increased usage by the state of these socially defined racial classifications; they control every aspect of life of the subordinate groups within the country. The legislation that had the greatest affect in this capacity was the Population Registration Act of 1950. Under this Act, there were only three racial classifications, White, Coloured, and Native. The latter two were classified additionally according to ethnic group.

In the 1950s, influx control became a compulsory policy throughout South Africa. The Population Registration Law assigned every person an identity number that would seal his or her

fate as a South African--either improving or diminishing that individual's life chances:

> Each person was given an identity number, part of which was a racial classification: thus 00 meant a white South African, 01 a coloured, 02 a Malay, 04 a Chinese, 05 an Asian, down to an 09 for a Nama of South West Africa. Two sections, 06 for 'Other Asian' and 07 for 'Other coloured', provided for those who could not be fitted in elsewhere, a sort of miscellaneous of the human race.
>
> Those vital two digits were intended to, and did, affect life from birth to death, with every detail specified and fixed by law: in which hospital you could be born; in which suburb you could live...." (Pogrund 1990:79)

For Africans, the population registration system was particularly onerous because they had to carry reference books, also known as "passes," to move about the country and to prove that they had a right to live or work in certain areas. These passes had to be shown when requested by the authorities, and failure to do so or a refusal to carry a pass meant imprisonment, a fine, or both.

State-ascribed racial classification and stratification systems manifest as public policy. When using data sets like the South African censuses, it is imperative that social scientists and other researchers examine the processes and rationales used by states to classify their populations. On a surface level the South African data sets represent the distribution of the population at different times by age, sex, race, and geographic location. On another level, they reflect a history of governmental policies of racial discrimination in southern Africa.

Racial Classification in the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei, 1980, 1985, and 1991

The Afrikaner constitutions of the Orange Free State, in 1854, and the Transvaal, in 1860, established in law the principle of inequality between African and European in church and state (Thompson 1995:100-03). When Dr. D.F. Malan lead the National Party government to power in 1948 the banner of apartheid was raised high, and the future of the principle of European superiority looked bright. By 1950, the state policy of partition unfolded (Christopher 1994:66-73). Under the policy of state partition all Natives in South Africa would become members of an "independent" nation. The objective was to eliminate racial diversity—in particular to eliminate the African political presence in the most economically well off areas. In 1959, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act created a hierarchy of local governments for the rural reserves. Traditional authorities (such as chiefs and headsmen) assumed power in these "homelands." The South African Native Trust Lands designated certain areas as Native Reserves. With the exception of the Ciskei and the Transkei, the Native Reserves of Trust Land were grouped together on a linguistic basis and brought under the supervision of the Chief Commissioner. These states served more as a symbol of domination than as a realized objective. In 1951, less than 40 percent of the African population lived in the new states. Christopher reports that "Census enumerators in the Black states tended to find the characteristics of the dominant group rather than the minority while compiling the census data, thereby statistically reducing the extent of the minority problem" (Christopher 1994:69). The Republic of South Africa continued these Apartheid policies and introduced several consolidation plans that amounted to no more than efforts to resettle African populations without compensation.

The 1970 Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act assigned all Africans to one of the ten

homelands that included the four independent TBVC states—Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei. The Republic of South Africa included six Self-Governing Territories (SGT): Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, Qwaqwa, and the Common Area (CA) which included the rest of the country. The Republic established the TBVC states as racial- and ethnic-specific geopolitical units. The populations within the TBVC States and the SGT areas were predominantly African, and they continued to serve as the majority of laborers within the Republic of South Africa. Many of the laborers had temporary residences in South Africa or they commuted to work. The TBVC states conducted a census after the Republic of South Africa granted them "independence"—Transkei in 1976, Bophuthatswana in 1977, Venda in 1979, and Ciskei in 1981.

Transkei, Boputhatswana, and Venda conducted population censuses in conjunction with the Republic's 1980 census of the population. The independent statistical offices conducted the enumerations, but the Republic's CSS produced the tabulations, and individual governments published the results. The census results were used to determine how much money was given to these governments by the Republic of South Africa from customs revenues. The amount given was determined by the size of the population, so both the Republic and the TBVC states tended to challenge the figures.

In 1985, all four TBVC states conducted population enumerations. The Transkei's census was a de jure estimate of the population and was derived from a sample. The Transkei sample was based on 1400 aerial photographs. Bophuthatswana and Venda's censuses were modeled after the Republic of South Africa's and, as before, the CSS processed the data and produced the tabulations.

In 1991, the Republic--via the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)--monitored

the TBVC enumerations. Officials considered the Venda census to be a very accurate enumeration. Ciskei had a "50 percent" response rate and used a sample, based on aerial photos of houses in the area, to inflate the population. Data on the racial classifications of the population were collected and tabulated in the censuses for the Republic of South Africa, Bophuthatswana, and Venda.

The Last Apartheid Census

The CSS took the last census of the apartheid era in 1991. They enumerated the 1991 Republic of South Africa population on a de facto basis. The 1991 census was the first de facto census. All previous censuses were collected on a de jure basis where RSA citizens as well as foreigners present within the boundaries for more than three months were enumerated. The CSS distributed census questionnaires to the population beforehand and collected completed returns after March 8, 1991. If the respondent was unable to complete the questionnaire or requested assistance in completing the questionnaire a census enumerator aided in the completion of the form.

Apartheid, as a system, produced extreme levels of residential segregation (Christopher 1992). It was part of a system that disorganized African communities, lead to European acquisition and occupation of the land, and to European control of African labor (Christopher 1983; Magubane 1979:142-43). Consequently, by 1991 a door-to-door survey was not possible for areas populated by Africans. In fact, the CSS found that more than 83 areas were inaccessible "during the preparations for the enumeration of the census" (RSA 1992).

The CSS asked the HSRC to estimate the population in these "inaccessible" areas from a combination of sampling and aerial photographs. HSRC enumerated a sample of the 83 areas

using this strategy. The HSRC took a "sample" based on a set of assumptions regarding the number of residents interviewed by a team of eight census enumerators, and inflated the population estimates in accordance with the aerial adjustment factors.[6] The CSS then adjusted these numbers for underenumeration. Table 3 gives an indication of the extent to which these adjustments affected the population estimates.

Table 3. Percentage of Population Estimated By Method, 1991

Race	Census	Survey	Aerial	Demographic	Final Estimate
			Male		
African	52.58	0.69	27.59	19.13	10,864,932
Coloured	88.13	0.00	0.01	11.86	2,519,833
European	86.82	0.07	1.38	11.73	1,605,811
Asian	84.07	0.25	2.72	12.96	488,952
All	62.91	0.50	19.60	16.99	15,479,528
			Female		
African	55.05	0.75	29.71	14.49	10,781,538
Coloured	90.28	0.00	0.01	9.71	2,548,278
European	88.38	0.08	1.55	10.00	1,679,907
Asian	85.16	0.24	2.67	11.94	497,669
All	65.41	0.54	20.91	13.14	15,507,392
			All		
African	53.81	0.72	28.65	16.82	21,646,471
Coloured	87.62	0.08	1.46	10.85	3,285,718
European	89.21	0.00	0.01	10.78	5,068,110
Asian	84.62	0.24	2.69	12.44	986,620
All	64.16	0.52	20.25	15.06	30,986,919

Source: 1991 South African Census Micro-data. Estimates do not include TBVC areas.

The 1991 population census was a failure. The CSS enumerated only 64 percent of the population. Such a large underenumeration reflected the political discontent and opposition of the African National Congress (ANC) to the enumeration. As late as March 8, 1991 *The Star* reported that "a stand-off between the African National Congress and the Government over the census continued yesterday, with the ANC sticking to its demand that the R60 million survey be

postponed." In addition to the ANC opposition, *The Star* also reported that there were "reports questioning the fact that members of the public would be asked to state their race—in spite of the announcement that the Population Registration Act was to be scrapped."[7] The CSS counted only 53 percent of the African population in the census enumeration. The HSRC estimated about 45 percent of the number of Africans from aerial photographs and demographic techniques. The CSS did a better job counting Coloureds (88 percent), Whites (89 percent), and Asians (85 percent). After the data from the survey and aerial photographs were added, the African population was still underenumerated by 17 percent, the Asian population by 12 per cent, and the White and Coloured populations by 11 percent each.

The apartheid censuses of 1980, 1985, and 1991 all exclude the former TBVC states. But the CSS made at least one effort to estimate the size of the Republic of South Africa and the TBVC states (RSA 1992). This effort produced estimates of the size of the population that served as the basis for estimating the level of underenumeration, and also as the basis for the weights used in the micro-data tapes produced by CSS for the 1991 census (see Table 3). The SGT areas were not clearly demarcated into Enumeration Areas (EA) (RSA 1997). Teams of enumerators were used to "sweep" through these areas without controls of demarcated boundaries or lists.

The method of enumeration had a profound impact on the estimated population. Table 4 presents the estimated sex ratio by the method of estimation. Women appear to be over-represented in the census enumeration. The aerial-survey inflation increases the sex ratio for Africans and Europeans while reducing it for other population groups. Finally, the demographic inflation tended to reduce the sex ratio for all population groups. The final estimates of the population sex composition reflect the impact of these inflations. The impact of these changes is

most pronounced on the African male population. The sex ratio of the demographic inflation is 75, and indicates a significant inflation of the male population by this method. So significant is the inflation that it produces a deficit of men. While this may reflect the "true" sex ratio of the African population, it also reflects the fact that the African sex ratio is a factor of the inflation methods and not the enumeration.

Table 4. Sex Ratio by Estimation Method, 1991

Race	Census	Survey	Aerial	Demographic	Estimate
African	103.89	107.75	106.83	75.16	99.23
Coloured	103.60	89.19	100.93	82.80	101.13
European	106.49	112.39	117.82	89.14	104.61
Asian	103.09	98.27	99.71	93.77	101.78
All	104.16	107.66	106.88	77.48	100.18

Source: Table 3

The Post-Apartheid Census

In April 1994, South Africa held its first fully democratic elections. Afterward the Republic of South Africa reincorporated the six SGT and the four TBVC states, and they were integrated into the 1996 census (RSA 1998a). In October 1996, the CSS conducted the first free census in the Republic of South Africa (in September 1998, the Central Statistical Service [CSS] changed its name to Statistics South Africa [Stats SA]). Either colonial rulers or some form of apartheid government had supervised all previous censuses under a banner of African domination (also see Zuberi and Khalfani 1999). These earlier census efforts had major problems enumerating the African population. Table 5 presents estimates of underenumeration by race between 1980 and 1996. The 1996 census presents by far the most complete South African enumeration ever taken.

Table 5. Estimated Undercount by Race (%) & Year

Race	1980*	1985*	1991*	1996
African	22.00	20.40	46.20	10.50
Coloured	3.20	3.50	12.40	10.50
European	8.50	5.50	10.80	9.00
Asian	4.40	6.50	15.40	6.10

Source: RSA 1992, 1998a; and Table 3. All numbers are rounded
* The estimates of undercount for these years does not include TBVC areas.

Compared to the previous apartheid censuses, the 1996 population census was a huge success. Stats SA enumerated 93 percent of the population. Such a large improvement in the enumeration reflected the political success of the reformed Stats SA and increased support for the enumeration process. Stats SA counted more than 88 percent of African men and about 90 per cent of African women. The Coloureds were counted at about the same rate as Africans with Asians being the most completely enumerated of the races (94 percent of men and 95 percent of women); 91 percent of Whites were enumerated.

DISCUSSION

The use of race becomes a fact of identity in racially stratified societies. Even the members of the marginalized racial group feel compelled to maintain the racial classifications. The logic of the racial classification becomes obvious even to the marginalized groups. As mentioned above, the Statistics Director for Bophuthatswana stated in the 1991 census report that in spite of the negative history of classifying the "four ethnic groups, Whites, Coloureds, Asians and Blacks...it does make *demographic sense to retain the classifications....* to the extent

that one finds more homogeneity within the groupings than differences, and this is crucial to the study of demography amongst other disciplines" (RB 1991:iv).

Racial classification in South Africa is a perfect example of what Paul Starr (1992) refers to as *legitimate classifications* and *legitimate use* of classifications. According to Starr governments must determine which classifications will be used in political discourse and administration of the states. Legitimate classifications reflect the government's decisions as to which classifications will be used and which classifications will not be allowed. More than simply a personal choice, classification of social difference by the state is part of how societies socially differentiate. As such, legitimate classifications can fight or aid social stratification. Secondly, the government must determine when and how legitimate classifications can be used. For example, how will statistical information be organized around them? Legitimate use poses a problem in the political choice of legitimate classifications.

The twentieth century proved to be a tumultuous time for southern Africa, during which land continued to be encroached upon and claimed by Europeans. However, it also marks the century in which Africans engaged in armed and other forms of political struggle to regain their land (Gerhart 1978). Toward the end of the twentieth century, we find Africans regaining control in the Republic of South Africa, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Botswana.

The history of the development of the South African state and Afrikaner identity played an important role in the development and the composition of the country that is today known as the Republic of South Africa. As one Afrikaner leader noted, "The Afrikaans Language Movement is nothing less than an awakening of our nation to self-awareness and to the vocation of adopting a more worthy position in world civilization."[8] In fact, the Afrikaans Language Movement was to become a major site of the struggle against apartheid by the Black

Consciousness Movement. Unlike the English-speaking white identity with its internationistic identification with European imperialism, Afrikaans and Afrikaner racial identity was based on a specific notion of bringing and developing civilization in South Africa. European origin was equated with civilization, and the new Afrikaner culture was seen as the most recent manifestation of this cultural transformation. Thus, if Afrikaans became the language of the nation it would also result in a modernization of the population's "self-awareness." This ethnocentric concern with language served as a model for partisan demographic research as well. No single demographer expressed this fact as clearly as J. L. Sadie. In 1949 he wrote:

> In South Africa the outstanding problem, dominating all others, is the relative numbers of the different races constituting the Union's population, and their differential rates of growth. For in the long run numbers must count. In this connection it is the numerical relation between Europeans and non-Europeans, and in particular between Europeans and Natives, which commands our attention. A complacent attitude towards this problem on the part of the Europeans, who as a minority still rule the country, is, to say the least, irresponsible. (Sadie 1949:3)

Historically, the census has provided social contexts for political discussions about racial categories. The South African state has incorporated official racial classifications into the administration of the state. The colonial governments of the past found it necessary to racially classify the population in order to levy taxes and allocate benefits. The racial classification of the African population facilitated the process of exploiting the colony and transforming indigenous identities to support the colonial process. Administrators and scholars viewed the census as demonstrating South Africa's civilization to the world (see Cousins 1921 and Sadie 1949). Thus, the act of enumeration was an act of defining the colony for the civilized European

world. The pre-modern censuses were a key element in the colonial process of transforming the identity of the African subject.

Official classifications influence personal identities as well as social science research. Given the influence of the government on society these classifications leave an important imprint on the same society. Official classifications change as a result of changes in the social structure. Therefore, there is a symbiotic relationship between the state's efforts to develop and use racial classifications, and the societies use of, adherence to and development of these classifications.

The official racial classification appears to never change (Starr 1992). In its official context, race has been a legitimate classification phrase for the last three hundred years. However, as we have seen in colonial and post-colonial South Africa, the notion of race and racial classification has been extremely dynamic. This dynamism has been part of the political process. Racial classifications helped European colonists control a subordinate population. Consequently, the role of institutions in maintaining and legitimating racial classifications was important to the White South African efforts to maintain control and power.

Racial classification of the South African population has been used for political purposes. In particular, apartheid used racial classification to signify African "otherness" and African marginalization. On a broad level, apartheid laws sought to ensure that whites maintained social, economic and political control over the country and over Africans. This was deemed necessary since the African population greatly outnumbered the white citizenry.

Race expresses and symbolizes two different kinds of social things. Race is the outward and visible form of socially salient physical difference; it is also the flag of the population--the sign by which each racial population distinguishes itself from others, the visible mark of its distinctiveness, and a mark that is borne by everything that emanates from the race. Race is the

symbol of both stratification and population identity, because both are aspects of society. Thus, racial identity becomes part of a group's collective identity and its sense of history and culture, but *the group transfigured and imagined in the physical form of skin color is what appears as race*. The modern South African census illustrates how important race can be in a political context.

Before the 1996 enumeration, various governmental agencies in South Africa used racial classifications to facilitate the marginalization of the African population and other racially marginalized populations. The present government has advanced a policy against racial stratification for the purpose of domination. Time will tell if their use of racial classification will help end the legacy of racial stratification; however, history is not on their side.

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Notes

[1] This is the same Philip V. Tobias who published the landmark study undermining the scientific basis of "claims that races of man have been shown to differ in quantity of brain-substance and especially, of grey matter in the cerebral cortex" (Philip V. Tobias "Brain-size, Grey Matter and Race—Fact or Fiction?" *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol. 32 (1970): 3). However, even at this late date Tobias maintained a racialized view of human difference.

[2] As Hermann Giliomee notes, "South Africa's institutionalized racism...can best be understood as a product of the Afrikaners' conception of their distinct place in the social structure" (Giliomee 1995:190).

[3] In addition to the four colonies that composed the Union of South Africa in 1910, Lesotho (Basutoland), Botswana (Bechuanaland Protectorate), Swaziland, Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Malawi (Nyasaland), and Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) could have also become part of the Republic as they were either British colonies or protectorates, or territorial possessions of the Cape Colony.

[4] On December 8, 1911, the Director of the Census Bureau in the Unites States received a letter from the Director of the Census in South Africa, J. B. Moffat.

[5] Actually, the census was administered on March 7 of 1991, and the Population Registration Act Repeal Act of 1991 did not go into effect until June 28, 1991.

[6] "The HSRC's field workers and organisers, each with a team of census enumerators, visited the indicated premises and shacks on the ground and ensured that each resident was enumerated. The particulars obtained in this manner were then projected in accordance with the number of

dwelling structures to obtain an estimate of inter alia the population number in the specific area. For instance, if the particulars show that for 10 dwelling/structures the average occupancy rate is six persons per dwelling, then a hundred dwellings will have an estimated six hundred occupants" (RSA 1992:ix).

[7] The number of articles on the politics of the 1991 census was extensive. For a few additional examples see the *Transvaler,* February 8, 1991, *The Star,* March 6 and 7, 1991.

[8] Dr. D.F. Malan cited in Giliomee (1995:192). Dr. Malan, along with General Hertzog, was one of the original Afrikaner nationalists at the beginning of the century.

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