Social Classes, Habitus and Sociocultures in South Africa

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Abstract: There is a lot of excellent work on inequality in South Africa. However, most studies focus on economic inequality and/or race. In contrast, this paper looks at social inequality. It argues that in contemporary South Africa, a hierarchy of social classes emerges, which is the heir of hierarchies developed under Apartheid. The segregated hierarchies now converge into a single social structure but partly persist as distinct hierarchies. This becomes evident in the habitus types that research for this study established on the basis of life-course interviews conducted in 2017.

This paper studies the reproduction of social inequality in South Africa via people's habitus. It argues that the incorporation of habitus traits leads to a persistence of the social structures, in which these traits are acquired, even across significant transformations. With regard to South Africa, it can be observed that structured developed before and under Apartheid continue to persist to some degree even in contemporary South Africa, both as elements of people's habitus and as foundations of social classes that have been emerging in South African society. The paper identifies five social classes and seven habitus types, all of which can be traced to the social hierarchies of Apartheid.

The argument draws on 42 qualitative life-course interviews conducted with all section of the South African population in 2016/17. The theoretical and methodological approach was developed in a comparative research programme on social inequality (see Jodhka et al. 2017). The programme studies the emergence of social classes in capitalist societies around the world. It argues that the transition to a capitalist democracy ignores the structures of inequality, which persist in spite of the formal equality of all citizens in the fully developed democracy. This argument entails that the structures of social inequality, or domination, are more fundamental than the market, democracy or capitalism. While this argument has been considered highly implausible with regard to Germany, it is partly accepted with regard to Brazil, but hardly anyone would contradict it with regard to South Africa. Therefore, the paper largely agrees with previous research on inequality in South Africa. It merely adds a framework focussing on *social* inequality and offers an explanation of contemporary social classes and habitus types in the country.

The first section of the paper defines the concepts and the theoretical framework that we use in our interpretation. In the second section, we devote some space to our methodology since it is somewhat innovative and should be made transparent in order for the reader to critically engage with our results. The results are presented in sections three and four. The third section outlines the emergence of the current class structure, mainly based on secondary literature and partly on our fieldwork. The final section introduces the social structure of contemporary South Africa with an emphasis on habitus types and the distribution of capital.

Concepts

The foundation of the theoretical framework used in this research on inequality is Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. However, it had to be adapted in several regards. Firstly, Bourdieu fully developed his theory with regard to a European society with a long capitalist past. Most societies, however, have a colonial past and have experienced the transition to capitalism only recently. Secondly, Bourdieu's frame of reference did not yet include the transformations caused by globalization, neoliberalism and mass migration. Thirdly, he did not really operationalize his concepts. The following paragraphs revise Bourdieu's framework against the background of these shortcomings and the results of our research in non-European countries (cf. Jodhka et al. 2017).

This research is devoted to *social* inequality, which is not only determined by the distribution of economic goods and money but also by the distribution of other forms of *capital* and of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984) as well as by the historical development of society. Social inequality signifies the differential access to activities, positions and goods that are valued in society. Our research shows that the disposal of capital is not so much a result of competition but a heritage that is reproduced from one generation to the next. We discovered that in capitalist societies, this legacy is passed on within boundaries of social classes. We define *social class* as a tradition line which reproduces itself from one generation to the next by passing on relevant capital and symbolically distinguishing itself from other classes. Our concept of social class can be operationalized by establishing the limits of social mobility. The limit of a social class is rarely crossed by social mobility. A *tradition line* is a common class culture, which is based on habitus and capital (Thompson 1963).

However, social class only explains inequality in nation states with a long capitalist past. In other societies, many precapitalist structures of inequality persist that have to be interpreted within the particular framework of history, culture and society. We offer a means of interpretation under the heading of *socioculture* (Jodhka et al. 2017). Sociocultures are also the predecessors and the foundation of contemporary social classes. They are social structures that configure social inequality in capitalist, democratic societies. Social classes are preconfigured by earlier sociocultures, which partly persist even after the emergence of a class society. It is important to note that the concept of socioculture does not imply any type of modernization theory but merely reflect the fact that almost all societies on the globe have adopted some form of capitalism.

In a capitalist society, resources are needed to access valuable goods, positions and activities. Bourdieu (1984) has conceived of the unequal distribution of resources in a systematic and sociological way by analyzing them as *capital*. The social division of capital determines a society's social structure. Bourdieu distinguishes between economic capital, cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital. Any analysis of inequality has to consider not only the total amount of capital but also the relative strength of each type of capital and the history of their acquisition (Bourdieu 1984: 109).

Let me illustrate the types of capital with regard to European societies. A newly rich may have more economic wealth than his aristocratic neighbour but he will not make many friends in the neighbourhood and not be admitted to the golf club and therefore remain an outsider. He lacks social capital or the socially relevant networks. He has not learnt how to behave correctly in these circles, either, he does not possess any old pieces of art handed down from previous generations of the family and he did not attend one of the elite schools that all the neighbours have frequented and used to form their social networks. He lacks cultural capital or the appropriate practical skills, cultural objects and educational titles. Finally, his family name does not resonate

with any neighbour and he does not have any honorary titles that would be appreciated in the neighbourhood. He lacks symbolic capital.

The examples to illustrate the four types of capital identified by Bourdieu obviously pertain only to European capitalist nation states. Especially cultural capital is assessed very differently in a non-European setting, while social and symbolic capital are constituted in a different way. However, the general categories remain surprisingly close to those in European societies. This is due to the fact that most societies have a colonial past and almost all societies have experienced a capitalist transformation. In our research we found wealth, income, educational title, family networks, membership in organizations, family name and honorary titles to be meaningful operationalizations of capital in the global South as well. Our research first established the types and categories of capital that are relevant in South Africa and then operationalized the categories.

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is based on the assumption that one has the tendency to act in the way in which one has learnt to act (Bourdieu 1977). If a form of behaviour is repeated many times, it has the tendency to become a stable pattern. This pattern acquired in a particular context is re-activated when a similar situation arises. If the environment is stable, a permanent pattern for activity is acquired and incorporated. That implies a standardization with regards to scenarios of use and a somatization of segments of actions. Habitus is a psychosomatic memory. The conditions of the social world inscribe patterns of action onto the body, which then produces and reproduces the social world. The habitus is generated by social conditions and produces expectations and patterns of action, which are adapted to the conditions. Bourdieu explains an action by a reconstruction of the precise correlation between the production of the habitus and its application. The application can change the social structures but only if the habitus does not fully coincide with them.

Bourdieu tells us neither theoretically nor empirically how society is actually embodied and how the embodiment plays out. Therefore, his concept of habitus has not really been operationalized. This is partly due to the fact that he never defined a scope of explanation for the concept of habitus. It seems that any action can be explained by the habitus and that the habitus comprises all patterns of action. Since it is obvious that there are deviations and conscious decisions, Bourdieu simply claimed that human beings act unconsciously and mechanically in "three quarters" of all actions (1984). This imprecise use of the concept leads, on the one hand, to very weak correlations between explanans and explanandum in his work. Even Bourdieu's prime examples, the markers of highbrow culture in France, such as an inclination toward classical music and expensive drinks, are only twice as likely to appear in the upper class as in the middle class (1984). On the other hand, the social person and the social group are reduced to one uniform habitus type.

The imprecision is compounded by the fact that Bourdieu seems to apply the concept of habitus to all societies and all contexts. In the end, the notions of habitus and person become co-extensive. However, if a society is minimally differentiated, such as Lao peasant villages in the recent past, it makes little sense to apply the concept of habitus in a sociological sense because the social conditions are the same for everyone. This implies that there is only one habitus and no social distinction. And this, in turn, means that there is nothing for the concept of habitus to explain, since the description of the social conditions would render any mediating term superfluous.

Therefore, the concept should be restricted to differentiated societies. We also suggest that the explanandum should be delimited and defined more precisely. It makes no sense to explain highly refined and variable dispositions like the preference for a certain wine on the basis of habitus, since life-styles are complex, partly conscious and rather fluid, while they are not as relevant to

the explanation of social structure as more basic elements of the habitus. We propose to only aim at deeply incorporated social attitudes, which are hardly accessible to conscious modification and are usually acquired in early childhood. The social environment of early childhood is usually that of the parents. This is where attitudes such as self-confidence, independence, a sense for education and culture, ambition and discipline are developed. These are dispositions that are relevant in a capitalist society, since they are the resources that decide about success or failure – according to the values and assessments that prevail in this type of society. I will refer to these basic dispositions acquired early on in life as *primary habitus*.

Methodology

Bourdieu never developed a proper methodology to study habitus, which we have done in our research. We were inspired by previous studies by Vester et al. (2001), Vester-Lange and Teiwes-Kuegler (2013) and Bohnsack (2007), all of whom aimed at establishing a method of empirically studying the habitus. The analysis of pre-capitalist sociocultures makes use of the work by Thompson (1963) and Vester et al (2001). It has to combine historical research with ethnographic and life-course research. All these methodologies were developed for the study of Europe and have to be adapted to a non-European setting.

To access the primary habitus and its formation, we make use of a life-course interview. It comprises open questions on parents and grandparents, childhood, education, partnership and family, everyday life and hopes for the future. The respondents are only interrupted if vital information is missing from their discourse. In addition to the open questions, a series of closed questions on social data and specific information focusing on the categories of capital and particular aspects of the habitus are added. The interview is recorded and transcribed, anonymizing all personal information.

An interview is a social practice and in many regards resembles everyday communication. At the same time, the life-course interview delivers information about the emergence of the habitus in the interviewees' childhood and later life. In the interaction, the social relation between the interviewer and the interviewee plays out, since categories like age, gender, education and respect influence the way the interview partners talk to each other. The categories in turn are closely related to the primary habitus. The double function of the interview as practice and source of information has been pointed out by Karl Mannheim, who distinguished between what- and how-meaning (1964: 104). Whereas the what-meaning refers to the information given in the discourse and its intentionality, the how-meaning refers to the pragmatic dimension of the way things are said – or the habitus. As a consequence, Mannheim interprets a discourse as a social practice by pointing to the fact that people might lie or misremember with reference to facts but not with reference to the action itself or the habitus. Sociological interpretation, according to Mannheim, could therefore use the interview or any other type of discourse as an expression of the habitus.

Mannheim's approach has been developed into a sophisticated methodology by Ralf Bohnsack (2008) against the background of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. We applied Bohnsack's "documentary method" in the interpretation of our life-course interviews and modified it just a little. The documentary method aims at the construction of habitus types in an inductive way. The interpretation of the interviews is carried out by a group in a sequence analysis, i.e. discussing the interview sentence by sentence. This methodology is closely related to other qualitative methods, especially "habitus hermeneutic" (Vester-Lange and Teiwes Kuegler 2013), which also draws on Bourdieu.

We divided the process of interpretation into four steps. In the first step, the what-meaning of one interview was established in a descriptive way by means of a group sequence analysis. The second step focused on the how-meaning and identified characteristic categories. The third step compared the categories and their combinations in the interpreted interviews to establish the relevant categories and their combinations. Finally, types were constructed on the basis of similarities and differences in combinations of categories.

While the documentary method focuses on the how-meaning, our interviews also make use of the what-meaning. We record the information about the interviewee's ancestors, family situation, childhood, education and other aspects of his or her life and combine this information with the results of the interview interpretation. This allows us not only to check some aspects of our interpretation but also to generate hypotheses about the formation of the primary habitus and identify the types and amount of capital that were relevant in the interviewee's life course.

The fourth step, i.e. the construction of habitus types, is not very clear in the documentary method, neither theoretically nor empirically. Therefore, we had to clarify how characteristics combine to form a type. Often, social research is limited to isolated items and their correlation. In research on social structure and inequality, this is often the correlation between education and income. We, however, look at a combination of habitus traits and capital categories. Only certain combinations of factors occur in reality while others are rare or even non-existent.

In order to understand the probability of all possible combinations, we draw on Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1984) concept of family resemblance. Members of the same group share many characteristics but not all and not necessarily the same. There are sons of aristocrats without formal education and daughters of informal laborers with a PhD. But even these outliers will share the majority of capital and primary habitus traits with their parents. Any particular characteristic may be absent but the majority will be present. Wittgenstein illustrates the varying combination of changing characteristics with regard to a family: All members of a family have some things in common but no two members share exactly the same characteristics. "Different similarities between the members of a family overlap and crisscross: stature, face, eye colour, walk, temper" (1984: aphorism 67). Family members share certain characteristics but not (all of them) in the same combination. It is not possible to reduce the characteristics to general categories shared by all members of the family. The characteristics embodied in the primary habitus can be understood as family resemblances. To identify likely combinations, construct social groups and establish habitus types, we use multiple correspondence analysis, which was also used by Bourdieu (1984).

Social classes emerge in a historical process out of pre-capitalist hierarchies, which partly persist as sociocultures. The sociocultures are mainly theoretical constructions, even though they are rooted in historical formations. We studied sociocultures in four steps. The first step comprised the study of historical sources. The second step consisted in the generation of hypotheses about the recent social structures and their persistence as sociocultures. In the third step, the sociocultures were traced in the interview material. The final step traced family histories out of the interviews that exemplify the sociocultures.

Research on sociocultures has to start with historical study. First, the most significant breaks or transformations of the recent past have to be identified along with their particular effects. Each period before and after a significant transformation is a (hypothetical) socioculture.

These hypotheses have to be tested by tracing the sediments of the earlier sociocultures in contemporary habitus. This is possible since some aspects of the primary habitus are passed on from at least one earlier generation, which has incorporated the structures of earlier historical times. It is possible to go back a century or so, as the oldest possible interviewees acquired their primary habitus up to around 80 years ago from their parents. Finally, a hypothesis combining class structure, habitus types and sociocultures can be generated by linking sociocultures to habitus and capital in contemporary society. A multiple correspondence analysis will show clusters belonging to different sociocultures, if these are still relevant in contemporary society.

The interview sample is complete when new cases do not deliver any new types of habitus and capital. This presupposes a systematic variation of the socially relevant indicators, such as age, gender, profession, income, education title etc. For this paper, only 42 interviews were interpreted. Therefore, the results have to be regarded as very preliminary and tentative. However, they are interesting and relevant enough to be published. The cases do comprise a significant variation in terms of the mentioned indicators. The weaknesses of the sample will be summarized in conjunction with the habitus types toward the end of the paper.
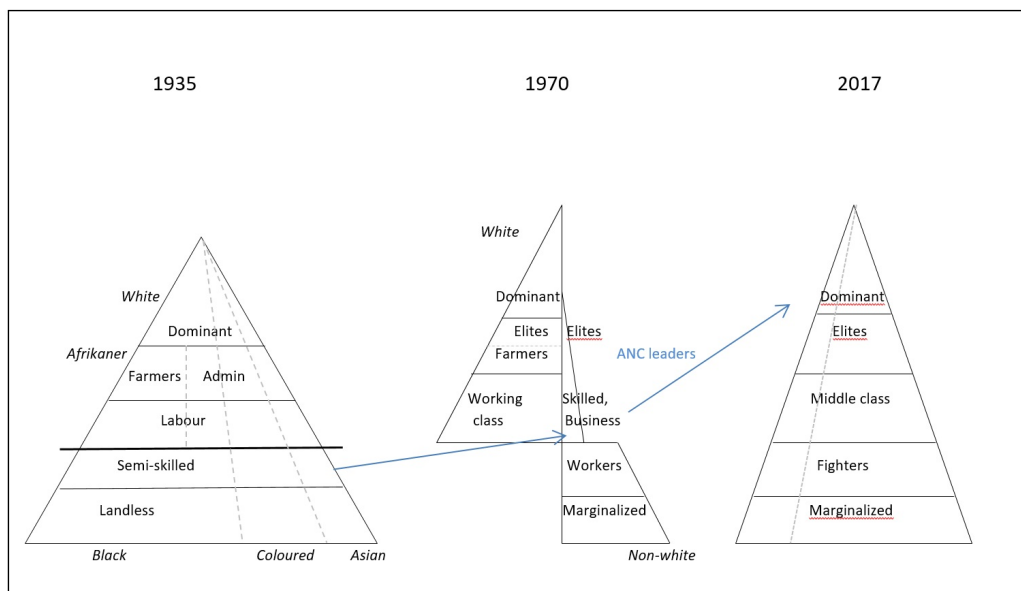
South African Sociocultures

All students of inequality in South Africa seem to agree that contemporary inequality is rooted in hierarchies established before the democratic transition of 1994. This is by no means trivial, since very few students of inequality in the global North would concede that this is true for any so-called advanced society. I would claim, in contrast, that there is no structural difference between South African and any "Western" society except for the precise type of pre-democratic social structure and the timing of the transition. All societies that qualify as capitalist and democratic are transformations of earlier hierarchies which partly persist as sociocultures. The transformation results in a particular structure of social classes, which is shaped by these sociocultures.

This section tries to outline some features of earlier South African social structures that are still relevant and persistent as sociocultures. Even though the sketch seeks to be historically correct, its main goal is to trace features of inequality in contemporary South Africa back in time rather than to give an accurate picture of South Africa in earlier periods. The sketch focuses on political economy because this aspect of South African society is very well researched. Of course, political economy is relevant for any study of recent South Africa but I would have emphasized the aspects of domination and sociocultural tradition lines more if the material had been available. This also influences the following interpretation of South African sociocultures, which seems to overstress labour and professions to the detriment of sociocultural factors. However, an emphasis on the economic dimension is to be expected since social inequality in capitalist societies is reproduced via the economy.

South Africa has a complex colonial and postcolonial history. To trace the transformations of inequality and hierarchies would go beyond the scope of this paper. The following outline only aims at a rough structural hypothesis in order to explain the results of the interview interpretations and the multiple correspondence analysis. Inequality in South Africa is rooted in Dutch and British colonialisms, their relation and their transformations after independence. They culminate in Apartheid, which is the most relevant socioculture to understand social inequality in South Africa today. Therefore, Apartheid will play a main role in the periodization of sociocultures and the explanation of social inequality.

The remainder of this section will be devoted to an annotation of figure 1. It shows the social structures of South Africa at three points in time. My argument is that each later structure is a transformation of the earlier one(s) and that the children tend to occupy the same relative hierarchical position as their parents, except where indicated otherwise. Of course, it would be more appropriate to show a moving image representing a social structure in constant flux and transformation. I chose 1935 and 1970 as two particular configurations to study in the past because they are roughly one generation apart from each other and from the present. They also represent society before two great transformations, which resulted in the subsequent social structures displayed in the figure. The social structure of 1935 certainly has to be understood against the background of colonialism, imperialism and the evolution of the South African Union. 1970 was, in many regards, the height of the Apartheid era.

Figure 1: South African Sociocultures

In the early twentieth century, the South African economy was based on agriculture, mining and trade (Feinstein 2005: 5). Agriculture was increasingly concentrated in large farms, as land was converted into property and bought by land companies or large owners (Trapido 1973: 56). Basically all of the farms were run by Europeans, often Afrikaners. Afrikaner society was structured into high administrators, landless clients and black or coloured servants (Trapido 1973: 53). Mining began in the late 1860s and was dominated by European firms and later by the a few conglomerates, especially De Beers and then Ernest Oppenheimer's Anglo-American Corporation (Hart/Padayachee 2013: 65). Labour in the mines was carried out by Africans and Asians imported from the European colonies. The British dominated mining and long-distance trade well into the twentieth century. Some trade was carried out by Asians on the coast of the Indian Ocean (Southall 2004: 522).

The Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 as a British dominion against the backdrop of British victory in the Boer Wars. In the first decades, it was a very decentralized, small and liberal state. After achieving sovereignty in 1931, the idea of a more developmentalist state gained

ground (Posel 1999). Mining surpluses were increasingly channelled into industrial growth. The state also pursued a policy of racial segregation and installed the forced labour regime for non-whites, which was the foundation of migratory labour on the one hand and racial discrimination on the other.

These developments resulted in the social structure of 1935 depicted in figure 1. The dominant group consisted mainly of the leading representatives of mining, finance and the state. All of them were European and most were of British descent. The large landowners and the bureaucracy formed two distinct sections of an emerging upper middle class, which we call "established" (Jodhka et al. 2017), also entirely European in origin. The clients of the landowners and the labourers formed the lowest stratum of dependent whites. In these groups, Afrikaners, who remained culturally and also geographically somewhat distant from the Europeans of British descent, were more prevalent.

The non-white population, being increasingly segregated, formed an almost entirely dominated society in itself, consisting of semi-skilled labourers and small entrepreneurs on top and the huge remainder at the bottom. However, some Asian traders had become rich by this time, while a few coloureds and Africans became administrators, clerks, entrepreneurs and skilled labourers, all of them basically urban residents.[2] Due to segregation, however, they did not really enter the social strata of white society. Most Africans remained in the rural areas, either on white-owned farms or increasingly in reserves (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 53).

The second pyramid in figure 1 attempts to visualize social structure at the height of the Apartheid period. It is a transformation of the 1935 structure but reflects the clear segregation of whites and non-whites, which resulted in the existence of two largely separate but unequally and functionally integrated societies. The segregation gave more room for the formation of non-white elites and intermediate groups than before 1948.

The South African economy under Apartheid was partly driven by developmentalist policies and partly by racial concerns. The Apartheid regime could not reduce white labour costs nor embark on a low-wage growth path. Therefore, it had to focus on high productivity and capital intensity (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 142). African labour was channelled into farming and mining, while self-employment and subsistence were restricted. In contrast, industrialization and skill development were successful but largely limited to the white population (Feinstein 2005: 200). As a consequence, African labour supplied the sectors that maintained low productivity, while the skilled white workers received uncompetitively high incomes (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 162). This economic structure was successful during the boom after the Second World War but came to an end in the 1970s, when high population growth coincided with the global economic crisis, South Africa's isolation and slowing growth. After the protests of the 1970s, Apartheid began to disintegrate.

The Apartheid government had assumed power after many South Africans had been unhappy about having been drawn into the war and Afrikaners felt unhappy about their peripheral position in white society. Inspired by US segregation, theology, fascism and nationalism, the Afrikaners supported a new government – in elections that were only open to whites. The new government supported whites and especially Afrikaners politically and economically. This entailed the continued transition to a strong, paternalistic state. Among the white population, affirmative action for the Afrikaners resulted in more equality between them and those of British descent and social differences decreased. After 1950, the white population became almost entirely urban and white collar.

Under Apartheid, public service was expanded (Posel 1999: 104). New staff and new bosses were mainly Afrikaners. In 1959, only 6 of the more than 40 government departments and sub-departments had English-speaking heads (Posel 1999: 105). However, since more money could be made in the private sector, very few qualified Afrikaners chose to work in the public sector, so that in 1970, non-white employees outnumbered whites in the public service (Posel 1999: 109). The same tendency could be observed in the realm of unskilled and increasingly semi-skilled labour as well (Gelb 2003: 23). Asians and coloureds were able to move into blue-collar and increasingly white-collar jobs, when the whites moved up (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 94).

Capital concentration increased and six groups basically controlling the entire South African economy emerged (Anglo-American, Rembrandt, Liberty, Anglovaal plus Sanlam and SA Mutual). In 1994, they still controlled more than 83 percent of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (Chabane et al. 1999: 6). Apartheid corporate structure was characterized by big white men, who were closely linked to each other and had attended the same schools, clubs and churches (Padayachee 2013: 263). The cultural divide between English and Afrikaans in big business began to erode after the 1970s (Gelb 2003: 23).

The Apartheid regime responded to labour shortage by preventing informal employment and encouraging capital intensity. This left Africans with the only option of formal employment. The policy also resulted in labour shortages in agriculture, higher wages in manufacturing and a tiny informal labour market (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 15). Africans were moved to overcrowded Bantustans, where most became proletarians instead of agricultural workers and peasants (Gelb 2003: 19). Increasingly, non-whites were working in white-owned enterprises, getting skilled while living in segregated areas. Africans in skilled and white-collar occupations numbered about 600.000 in 1987 (Gelb 2003: 24). At the same time, African business evolved in the Bantustans, along with an administration, traders and semi-skilled workers. Those Africans who had migrated into the towns retained their rural habitus, rooted in agriculture, until the 1970s (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 64). Their children received a good formal education and were ready to enter the labour market as skilled labourers and employees.

However, Africans did not move up to the top levels of society, which were reserved for whites. In the 1980s, only 2860 Africans were in managerial positions in the corporate sector (Southall 2014: 652). Even in 1990, merely 3 percent of the managers and 11 percent of the professionals were African. Among white-collar workers, their share was 31 percent but they mainly occupied the routine jobs (Southall 2004: 525). Asians and coloured were generally placed a bit higher up in the occupational hierarchy, basically reproducing and transforming their parental social positions depicted in the 1935 pyramid.

Racial discrimination worked on two levels: white unskilled labourers were paid more than double the Africans and there was a deep gap between skilled and unskilled labour (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 72). The Apartheid regime provided full employment for white people and channelled cheap African labour to unskilled jobs in mines and on farms. Therefore, Seekings and Natrass argue that the "basis of exclusion" shifted from race to class; "white South Africans acquired the advantages of class that allowed them to sustain privilege on the market and ceased to be dependent on continued racial discrimination" (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 6). I agree with the shift of the "basis" but argue that racial discrimination persisted (and persists) as an important component of pre-1994 sociocultures and therefore remains a powerful component of social inequality. Seekings and Natrass (2005: 115) themselves point to the fact that in 1975, 87 percent of the population in the lowest six deciles of the income distribution were classified as black, up to 10 as coloured,

2 as Indian and 2 as white. 95 percent of the top decile were white. The white social structure under Apartheid did not include lowest classes, while the non-white structure became very slim toward the top. Up to 40 percent of the population were poor Africans living in rural areas or Bantustans. Another large social group consisted of those Africans with access to a small sum of formal income. The stratum above consisted of skilled labour and was divided along race lines. The so-called middle class comprised employees, again divided along race lines but with a very small non-white segment. The elites were almost exclusively and the ruling class was entirely white.

The structure presented for 2017 in figure 1 is a transformation of the 1970 pyramid, even though the end of racist policies has entailed more and different social mobility than the advent of the Union and of Apartheid. Race is no longer the most important factor of social differentiation (Maré 2001: 90). However, social classes still retain a colour, since the bulk of the population occupies the same relative social positions as their parents (cf. Seekings/Natrass 2005: 232). The horizontal components of the 1970 pyramid, that were segregated along race lines, have basically merged horizontally creating social classes. Social mobility across class lines has mainly been experienced by those associated with the ANC leadership, who have moved into the two upper classes.

My analysis, which the next section presents in more detail, suggests that five social classes can be distinguished in contemporary South Africa: dominant class, established, middle class, fighters and marginalized.[3] This result resembles the classes that Seekings (2003) and Bezuidenhout et al. (2017) distinguish against very different theoretical backgrounds and on the basis of secondary statistical data. Bezuidenhout et al. (2017: 50) draw on Guy Standing's class analysis and distinguish elites, salariat, proficians, working class, precariat and unemployed. At the end of their analysis, they suggest that salariat and proficians form one upper middle class. Seekings (2003: 35) identifies upper class (owners of wealth, managers and professionals), semi-professionals (teachers, nurses etc.), skilled labour, core working class and marginal working class. He then goes on to acknowledge that this classification only refers to the economically active population and that it ignores non-labour incomes (Seekings 2003: 15, 33).[4]

Figure 1 illustrates how contemporary classes have been emerging from the social structures generated under Apartheid. The dominant class is largely a descendant of the dominant class under Apartheid. However, the transition to democracy was a real social transformation which included the take-over of a new political group, the leadership of the ANC. This leadership and some of their associates have ascended into the new dominant class of the capitalist democracy. Today, up to 22 percent of JSE shares are African-owned (Southall 2004: 538). This capital is highly concentrated in the hands of former ANC leaders. The core of this class consists of the descendants of the old ruling class, however. The same conglomerates continue to dominate the South African economy as before 1994, albeit with more interlinkages, less direct ownership and a confusing network of shareholding (Chabane et al. 1999: 7).

Government and the corporate sector remain closely linked, just like before 1994. Historically, big business has influenced the state in South Africa more than the other way around (Chabane et al. 1999: 17). The Oppenheimer family has shaped some of the economic policies of the ANC even before 1994 (Gelb 2003: 29). This is also true for the GEAR policy concept, which revised the redistributional policies proposed by the ANC in 1994 (Chabane et al. 1999: 20). With the consolidation of the dominant class, direct interference in politics will decrease, however, since capitalism functions better when class interests remain opaque (Jodhka et al. 2017). This social class comprises not more than 0.1 percent of the population.

What is usually referred to as the upper class, consists of those who occupy the leading functions in society. We call this the "established class". These are the managers, party politicians, professionals and large landowners. All of them would figure in the highest income brackets but they would not be owners of any significant economic capital except a couple of houses and cars – which are not used as capital but mainly as means of consumption and securities. This class has to labour for its means of consumption as well as out of a moral obligation. It wants to make a difference in the world. The established class also comprises the large landowners, whose habitus and sociocultural roots differ from the rest of the elites. The overwhelmingly largest chunk of agricultural land is owned by a rather small group of white farmers (Gelb 2003: 19). The majority of the members in this class continue to be white (Padayachee 2013: 281).

The middle class is more mixed but mostly consists of descendants of the skilled blue- and white-collar workers under Apartheid. Whereas the two upper classes are (proportionately) just a bit smaller than in the global North, the middle class in South Africa is a lot smaller. In Germany, it comprises more than 60 percent of the population, whereas in South Africa, it probably amounts to less than 20 percent (cf. Seekings/Natrass 2005: 337). As will be shown in the next section, the South African middle class (like the German) comprises two different tradition lines, one rooted in white collar and one in blue collar. The small size of this class is linked to Apartheid both in terms of racial policies and in terms of development strategy. The market for skilled labour remained small under Apartheid and so did the supply among non-whites. Since 1994, the demand for unskilled labour has decreased and the market for skilled labour has remained comparatively small (Leibbrandt et al. 2011: 14). However, most new entrants to the labour market are low-skilled Africans, who cannot access the middle class (Leibbrandt et al. 2007: 42). Yet, the majority of new members in the middle class are Africans. This is mainly due to the end of Apartheid and the ANC. It gave key positions in the state to its leaders, pursued affirmative action and expanded education (Southall 2014: 653).

Those low-skilled Africans newly entering the labour market as well as the descendants of those Africans who had access to an income form the newly emerging class of fighters. They are employed in the informal sector, agriculture, domestic work or self-employed. Most of them have roots in the rural areas and the Bantustans and have now moved to the least desirable urban areas. It is a social class that virtually struggles to make ends meet and to remain above the poverty line. This type of class is basically confined to the emerging economies of the global South (Jodhka et al. 2017). In South Africa, it is almost entirely non-white.

The poorest households are still concentrated in rural areas, especially the Northern provinces and the Eastern Cape. Much of the population lived outside of urban areas before the end of Apartheid but was not agrarian any more, since agriculture provided few jobs and contributed little to the incomes of the African population. Many poor rural households had land but did not cultivate it due to lack of capital and (to a small degree) skilled labour (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 222). The current marginalized class comprises descendants of these poor rural households, who accumulated neither cultural nor economic capital of any value. About 95 percent of the poorest 30 percent are classified as black (while not more than 0.5 percent as white) and most of them figure in the official statistics as unemployed or do not figure at all (Leibbrandt et al. 2007: 7).

Social Class in South Africa Today

This section explores the third pyramid in figure 1 by adding the dimensions of capital and habitus. It is based on the 42 interviews described in the section on methodology above. The result of a multiple correspondence analysis of the interview interpretations is depicted in figure 2. This statistical procedure calculates correlations and presents them in a two-dimensional space. The first dimension determines the correlations the most, the second a bit less and the other dimensions are not represented in the graph even though they are also calculated. Each dot represents a characteristic that is socially relevant. Those characteristics that appear close to each other are likely to appear in the same person or social group, those that are distant from each other are not. Lacking mobility between the clusters indicates the limit of a social class. I extract these limits from the interviews.

The social classes of the third pyramid are depicted along the diagonal line from the upper left to the lower right. The upper classes are shown toward the upper left-hand corner and the lower on the lower right hand. These two corners of the space correspond to the maximum and the minimum amounts of the total of relevant capital types and habitus traits. The first axis (top to bottom) is structured mainly by occupation and wealth, while the second axis (left to right) is defined largely by skin colour and the father's profession. This demonstrates the relevance of earlier sociocultures.

This is also the reason why the social classes are not displayed in layers on top of each other, even though upper and lower classes clearly appear on opposite ends. The x-axis is partly defined by the skin colours black and white. It is easy to see that the upper classes are clearly located on the left side, which is white, and the lower classes mainly on the right. The coloureds in this figure are at the lowest end of the x-axis toward the left, which means that they have much in common with the white middle class. While social class becomes more important than race, skin colour still matters in South Africa because it is both associated with a habitus and assessed by a habitus shaped under Apartheid. "Race thinking" does not disappear overnight (Maré 2001), and the habitus takes generations to change.

The dominant class is not represented in figure 2 because we could not interview any member of this class. However, some information is available and some can be extracted from other accessible sources. What can be said is that the income share of the richest percent as well as their absolute incomes increased after 1994 at the expense of other sections of the population (Harmse 2013: 14). The income share of those earning more than 10.000 Rand increased from 17 to 32 percent (Netshitenzhe 2013: 2). There were 257.000 Africans and 888.000 whites in this bracket in the early 2000s even though the number of Africans steadily increased after 1994. This is partly due to direct action on the part of the ANC and partly due to emigration (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 307).

The elites are the social class that occupies the leading functions in all spheres of society. Its members have to perform wage-labour. Up to 90 percent of their income is provided by salaries and their income accounts for up to 50 percent of the total expenditure in South Africa (Bhorat/Westhuizen 2012: 9). However, labour also contributes to their meaning of life. They do not merely carry out a task in order to be paid but they want to do something meaningful. Part of this life project is their wage-labour. Therefore, it makes sense to follow Max Weber and speak of a profession rather than a job.
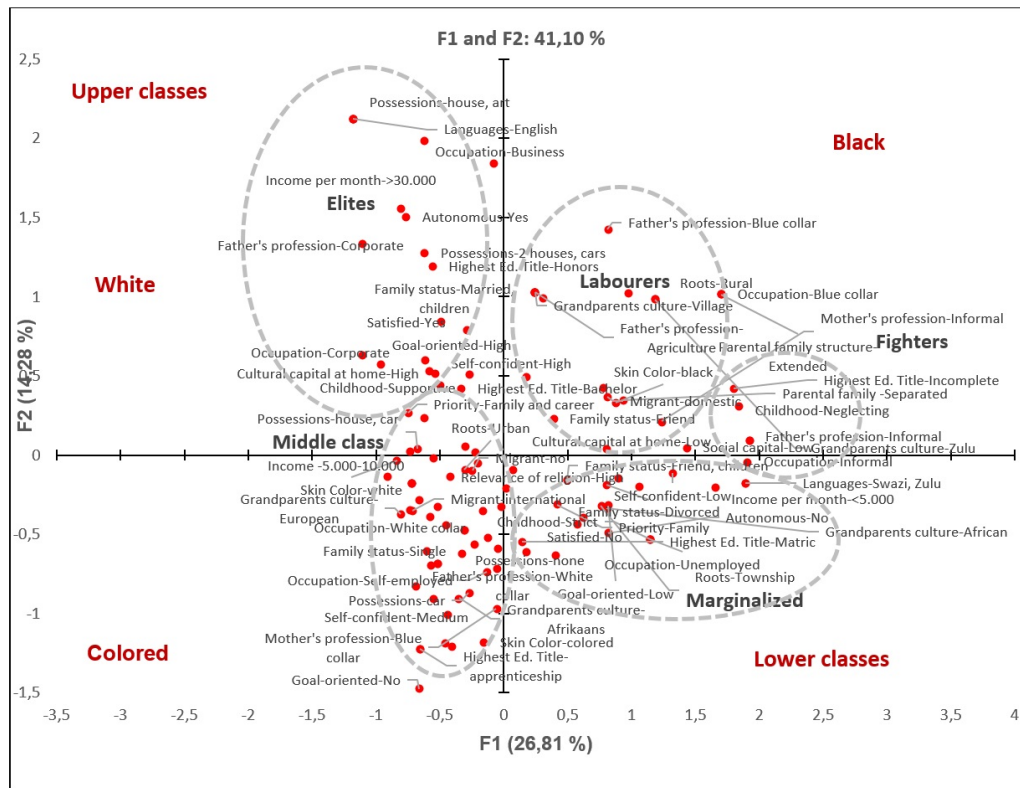
Figure 2: Multiple correspondence analysis of contemporary South Africa

The multiple correspondence analysis in figure 2 shows that the characteristics of a high income, possessions like a house and works of art, a high educational title, a job in the business world and a father with a profession as a corporate are close to each other and therefore likely to appear in the same person. This comes as no surprise. They express a high level of economic, cultural and social capital as well as a family origin of the same level. What is possibly just as unsurprising but usually omitted in studies of inequality in South Africa, is the cluster of habitus traits in this group: determination, career-orientation, a sense of autonomy, self-confidence and satisfaction. These are characteristics that the common sense might want to attribute to a particular psychology. But actually, they are distributed differently between the social classes (see table 1 below). Therefore, they are social traits. Yet, they are preconditions and results of "success" in society. It is also worth mentioning that they can be attributed to a particular family background. The dot identified as "supportive childhood" is located at the intersection of this class with the middle class. It clearly distinguishes all three middle classes from the lowest class.

The middle class comprises those people who have to work for their living but do not regard their job as a calling. Life in this social class is very much dominated by the concept of labour, which in turn is strongly linked to the level of education and associated skills. Its members have a rather secure position but they feel under threat from below and have little chance to move upward. Furthermore, the share of the middle class in total incomes has remained stagnant since 1994 (Bhorat/Westhuizen 2012: 17).

The characteristics of this class are spread widely between the dense cluster toward the lower left including a few dots toward the upper right. It is interesting that the lower left revolves around white-collar work and the dot furthest to the upper right represents blue-collar work. The contrast also implies a difference in skin colour. This seems due to the roots of both groups in Apartheid. The whites first became skilled and then moved into white-collar jobs. As blue-collar jobs became vacant, more and more persons with darker skin acquired the necessary skills. Even though both groups are equally far removed from the top of society, there is more overlap between the "urban middle class" and the "elites" than between "labourers" and "elites". There seem to be two tradition lines within the middle class, partly associated with race. This is visible in the habitus, as will be demonstrated below.

Urban roots are partly a common denominator of both tradition lines. Another commonality is the equal prioritization of family and career (as opposed to career in the elites). Otherwise, the habitus of the white and white-collar faction tends toward confidence, a higher relevance of religion, a family status as single and a supportive or strict childhood, while the labour faction tends toward a father as blue-collar worker, an earlier family past in the countryside and a low level of cultural capital in the previous generations.

An increasing percentage of this social class is African. Those Africans who had moved into skilled jobs passed on the level of education and other advantages to their children (Seekings/Natrass 2005: 300). A reasonable estimate would be that the African middle class comprises around four million persons (Southall 2014: 649). A little more than half would be upper, the rest lower middle class. The income share of the upper middle class is increasing, the share of the lower middle class decreasing. Nzimande distinguishes four sections of what he calls the African petty bourgeoisie: bureaucratic (rural, urban/township, Bantustan), traders (Bantustan, urban, capitalist), civil (nurses, teachers, clerks), corporate (Southall 2004: 525) – while it remains unclear where police and military figure in this. The civil petty bourgeoisie comprises a tiny group of state managers and a large, heterogeneous group of civil servants (Southall 2004: 532). It has benefitted the most from ANC rule but has become less progressive with the widening financial gap to the poor (Southall 2004: 535). African business today is overwhelmingly classified as survivalist and micro – their share in SME is very small (Southall 2004: 536).

The fighters are the social class of people that struggle to secure their existence and, so to speak, keep their head above the water. Under Apartheid, the predecessor of this class consisted of those families that had some access to whatever source of income. While this characterization still is true today, the source has changed. It used to be remittances from a family member or part-time labour. Today, it is mainly informal and casual employment. Casual employment increased form 14 percent in 1993 to 31 percent in 2008 (Leibbrandt et al. 2011: 14).

The fighters in figure 2 are not clearly distinct from the labourers and the marginalized. They have informal jobs and so did their parents. Their parents are typically separated, many respondents claim to have never or rarely met their fathers, so the prevailing pattern is growing up with the mother, often within an extended family. As a consequence, they describe their upbringing in a way that could be characterized as neglecting. Their families have a low level of social and cultural capital and this is reproduced among the current members of this social class. These two characteristics are located near the intersections of the three mostly African classes (cf. Leibbrandt et al. 2007: 44).

As Seekings and Natrass (2005) have argued, the marginalized class is characterized by the lack of labour – not by the lacking will to work. The overwhelming majority of people in this

social class are unemployed, usually this is true for the entire household or family. They are largely supported by social programmes. 70 percent of the income of the poorest decile comes from government aid (Leibbrandt et al. 2011: 23). The increase in unemployment may have been the greatest driver of inequality since the 1990s. The unemployed and poor are usually subject to a multitude of mutually re-enforcing negative characteristics, such as inconvenient or even insecure location, poor health (e.g. HIV), a lack of all types of capital and especially a childhood which does not convey any habitus traits required for success in a capitalist society.

In figure 2, the habitus characteristics opposite of those of the elites are clustered around the dot labelled "unemployed": no goal-orientation, no self-confidence and no autonomy. It comes as no surprise that these people are not satisfied with their lives. Interestingly, they clearly prioritize family over career, even though the families are rarely intact. Many members of this social class seem to have their roots in the townships. What does surprise is the highest educational title (matric), which is higher than the educational level attributed to the fighters (incomplete).

	Parental family	Up-bringing	Cultural capital	Social capital	Self-confidence	Goal orientation	Autonomy
Marginalized	Separated	Neglecting	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Entre-preneurial	Separated	Supportive	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Skilled labour	Intact	Supportive or strict	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Farmers	Intact	Supportive	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Emerging middle class	Separated	Supportive	Medium to high	Low	Medium to high	Medium to high	Medium
Established	Intact	Supportive	High	Medium	High	High	Medium
Business	Intact	Supportive	Medium to high	High	High	High	High

Table 1: Social class and habitus traits

Table 1 presents a distribution of the most relevant habitus traits in the interview sample. These are the combinations that appear – with the exception of a migrant from Nigeria, whose combination of habitus traits is not represented in the table. It is evident that the combinations of habitus traits have a strong overlap with social class but can also be traced back to the second pyramid (1970) in figure 1. What is called working class and emerging middle class, overlaps strongly in habitus traits, so do established and business. They actually form one class – even though the business people in my sample may actually be rather close to a dominant class habitus.

The seven habitus trait combinations summarized in table 1 are not equal to the habitus types that can be observed in South Africa today. The sample is too small and systematically incomplete to justify a complete analysis of South African habitus types. However, it indicates the strong correlation of habitus both with social class and with sociocultures. It also shows the important role of the social environment in early age – the type of parenting that a person receives – and its correlation with "personality" traits that are relevant in capitalism, such as self-confidence and goal-orientation.

The marginalized habitus is defined by lack – of education, self-confidence, goal-orientation and autonomy (being confident to make decisions independently and carry them out). The most important trait seems to be a childhood characterized by neglect. In all interviews with members of this group, the respondents described this atmosphere as well as a separation of the parental couple. All respondents in the sample are African. One respondent explains: "My mom is from

Swaziland. She worked in shops and in houses before she passed away ... Money was a issue ... When I was 16, I sat down and cried and I had to help her." A father does not appear in the interview. Today, the interviewee has two informal jobs and spends most of her Sundays in church.

There is a variation of the marginalized habitus, which differs in terms of the upbringing. Respondents speak of a caring, supportive atmosphere in their childhood. This seems to result in a significantly higher level of self-confidence as well as stronger commitment and independence. I use the term "entrepreneurial" to characterize this habitus since all interviewees in this group are trying to make a living by exploring new ways on the informal labour market or as petty entrepreneurs. Says one interviewee: "My aunt had a car. So I used it to drive people for money. This is how I started my taxi business." Almost all respondents in the sample are coloured.

The skilled labour habitus has intermediate values for all indicators. Parents of some respondents in the sample separated and some were strict. The values for the indicators of the skilled labour habitus are almost the same as for the emerging middle class – many of whose members actually have working-class parents or grandparents. Cultural capital of both groups reaches a similar total value but differs in composition. It could be characterized as blue versus white collar or practical versus academic. The habitus itself, however, is mostly identical. A respondent says: "I want to do a good job, that's all." It is interesting that many parents in this group separated during the respondent's childhood. In this group, as in the skilled labour habitus, skin colour does not seem to be a relevant factor.

Very close to these two habitus are the farmers. All of them are white and skin-colour plays a role for them. In terms of capital and social position, they clearly differ from the other middle classes, as visible in the second pyramid in figure 1, but in terms of habitus, they seem to be similar. The only significant deviation is a high level of autonomy or independence in comparison to skilled labour and emerging middle class. Both farmers in the sample have this job, or rather: life-style, in the fifth generation. Neither one attended university. Max Weber would have found his protestant ethic incorporated in them. One speaks of manners being "very important", of "discipline" and of "hard work".

The upper middle class seems to consist of two types, one that is based on cultural and one that is based on social capital. All representatives of the second type in the sample are high-level managers in the corporate sector, while the other type is prevalent in the administrative and cultural sectors. I am not sure if these two habitus structures should actually be distinguished. It is up for debate as well if the business habitus may not really be the habitus of the dominant class. All members of the first group have a university degree – and so do their siblings. Members of both groups characterize their childhood as "comfortable", "easy" or "caring". One respondent quoted his father saying: "I will help you, I will support you but I cannot live your life."

In addition, there may be a particular habitus of the petty bourgeoisie, distinct from skilled labour, farmers and emerging middle class. Possibly, however, it is identical with one of these groups. A more thorough analysis of a proper sample comprising all variations of habitus types would provide the basis for an answer to the open questions. More characteristics could be identified and correlated. This would make a systematic construction of South African habitus types possible – as opposed to table 1, which merely depicts the variation of several important characteristics and their actual combinations in the sample. At least, table 1 very convincingly links pyramids 2 and 3 in figure 1 and thereby renders plausible the hypothesis of a sociocultural foundation of contemporary habitus and social classes.

Conclusion

The multiple correspondence analysis and the study of habitus traits points toward an emerging hierarchy of social classes in South Africa. It also demonstrates that the classes are heirs of Apartheid hierarchies and reproduced in and through the habitus. The analysis revealed five social classes and, very tentatively, seven empirically observable combinations of habitus traits. The MCA clearly shows five clusters, which correspond to five social classes. However, it also demonstrates, to some degree, the continuing relevance of skin colour and the division of society into parallel structures. The upper and the lower classes preserve the skin colour they acquired under Apartheid to a significant degree, while this is less the case for the middle classes. The roots of contemporary South African society in earlier sociocultures is even more evident in the seven habitus patterns. They bear the marks of Apartheid and its economy.

It is interesting that social class in South Africa if the combination of upbringing and parental marital status is known (married, extended, separated or single with children). Furthermore, the correlation between the level of education and income is relatively weak. Finally, South Africans are acutely aware of inequality and those with a decent level of education even of the actual social structure discussed in this paper. This distinguishes South Africa clearly from North Atlantic societies, where parental family status plays a minor role, education is a good indicator of social class and most people (erroneously) believe they live in an egalitarian society with equal chances for all. Other societies in the global South have more in common with South Africa in these regards than with North Atlantic societies. Apart from this, due to the recent transformation, there is more social mobility in South Africa than in societies with a long capitalist past without major structural change, which is true for most North Atlantic societies. Finally, religion seems to be surprisingly important in all social classes of South Africa, whereas it strongly correlates with social class in other societies of the global South.

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Notes

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[2]I use the terms "African", "coloured", "non-white" and "white" when referring to social classification on the basis of the category race.

[3]Some of these are terms we use in the study of inequality in Brazil and Germany (Jodhka et al. 2017) and which may be applicable to South Africa as well. The marginalized are those who are excluded by the rest of society by being declared as useless. The fighters are a social class that struggles – either against relegation or for upward mobility. The established are the upper middle class that has a comfortable, secure position and considers labour as part of self-realization.

[4]Both classifications ignore the tiny upper class, since it is difficult to access and to assess – just like in any other country. For this reason, we have called this class "aloof" in Germany (Rehbein et al. 2015).