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Grievance Formation in a Country in Transition: South Africa, 1994–1998*

BERT KLANDERMANS

MARLENE ROEFS
Free University, Amsterdam

JOHAN OLIVIER
Human Science Research Council, Pretoria

Relative deprivation theory and social justice theory are applied in a study of grievance formation in South Africa. We hypothesized that grievance formation is affected by objective conditions (race and class) and subjective conditions (comparisons with others and across time, trust in government, and perceived influence on government). Between 1994 and 1998 we annually interviewed separate samples of South Africans. Our findings suggest that people's sense of grievance has become less related to race than to class. Furthermore, we found an interplay of the two kinds of comparisons in the formation of grievances. Depending on the comparison made and on the outcome of that comparison, it appears that people find it either easy or difficult to cope with a low living standard. These assessments are further qualified by trust in and influence on government. Trust and influence make people optimistic about the future and therefore more inclined to believe that their situation will improve.

The apartheid policies of the pre-1994 South African government resulted in a deeply divided society (Sisk 1995). Racial cleavages ran through every sector of society: South Africans were classified as either black, colored, Indian, or white. This classification in turn determined one's life chances: where one was allowed to live, with whom one was allowed to associate, where one was allowed to go to school, the kind of work one could get, the church to which one belonged. Apartheid politics had imposed race upon the South Africans as the overpowering identity (Marx 1998). Africans (blacks) occupied the lowest status of all four categories; the coloreds were next lowest, the Indians were next highest. The whites reserved the highest status in South African society for themselves.

Obviously, many years must pass before the racial cleavage loses its significance. Differential treatment of citizens will continue to be based on racial categorization for a long time, not only as a legacy from the past, but also because of the affirmative action programs that have been implemented to correct past injustices (South Africa Survey 1996/1997). Will the enduring existence of the racial cleavage continue to generate grievances? This question is vitally important for the country.

It is a well-documented social phenomenon that differential treatment is not necessarily converted into grievances. In the past, the racial cleavage obviously did generate grievances, as witnessed by the long-lasting struggle against apartheid. Will it continue to do so, now that the political landscape has been altered so dramatically? Or will cleavages other than the racial divide come to determine grievances in South African society?

These questions about the formation of grievances are not trivial. They possess not only tremendous political importance, but also great theoretical significance. As for the political importance, in a country that is

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socioculturally as heterogeneous as South Africa, any grievance defined along sociocultural lines poses a potential political threat. As long as grievances are distributed randomly in a society, they are politically neutral. If members of a group feel that their *group* is treated unjustly, however, group-based grievances will develop. Such grievances become politically relevant because aggrieved groups may—and often do—mobilize and demand change.

Grievance theory has little to say about such mobilization processes. Relative deprivation and social justice theories—two well-known families of grievance theories in social psychology—give little attention to mobilization, even though protest is mentioned as a behavioral consequence of relative deprivation and feelings of injustice (Hegtvedt and Markovsky 1995; Tyler et al. 1997). Traditionally, the mobilization of aggrieved people has been the subject of social movement research. Today's "ruling" paradigms—resource mobilization and political process theory—have always concentrated on why and how aggrieved people mobilize (for an overview, see Tarrow 1998). The question of why and how people become aggrieved has received much less attention. This is not to say that students of social movements regard grievances as irrelevant; rather, as protagonists of resource mobilization and political process theory argue, grievances are so ubiquitous in a society that their mere presence is not sufficient to explain the emergence of social movements.

Because of this lack of interest in the formation of grievances, relative deprivation theory, a grievance theory that formerly was important in the social movement domain, has lost its relevance for students of social movements. In general, very little systematic theorizing has been undertaken on the formation of grievances in the social movement literature. To be sure, the concept of a *collective action frame,* especially its component injustice frame, resulted in a renewed focus on grievances (for a synthetic treatment, see Klandermans 1997). Even so, very little has been said to date about the formation of such frames. Grievance theory in the social movement domain became enmeshed in ever more highly elaborated taxonomies of grievances, but how such grievances are formed remained largely unspecified.

As for the theoretical significance, the case of South Africa is interesting precisely because it is the situation in which we may expect that the racial divide will continue to exist, but in a political context that has changed dramatically. The South Africa case provides a unique opportunity to investigate questions about the formation of grievances that cannot be studied in relatively stable societies. On the one hand, in a society in transition, changes in the sociopolitical context may trigger the formation of new grievances. On the other, old grievances may disappear because people may feel that their situation is improving or because they are optimistic about the future.

In this paper we define grievances as feelings of dissatisfaction with important aspects of life such as housing, living standard, income, employment, health care, human rights, safety, and education. We will show that such feelings of dissatisfaction are not linked to objective outcomes in a simple way. Two literatures are proposed to clarify the reason: relative deprivation and social justice. The reasoning we develop here is applied to a description and an understanding of the changing patterns of grievances in South Africa. We hope we can demonstrate that sophisticated grievance theory—specifically, relative deprivation and social justice theory—remains relevant for the study of social movements.

THE FORMATION OF GRIEVANCES

Differential treatment of citizens does not necessarily generate grievances. Obviously, grievances are the result of some kind of evaluation. Relative deprivation theory emphasizes the importance of comparisons in determining outcome evaluations (for overviews, see Hegtvedt and Markovsky 1995; Tyler et al. 1997; Tyler and Smith 1998). Stouffer et al.(1949) were the first to point out that people compare their rewards with those of others in a comparison group and that the outcome of this comparison determines their evaluation.

Other classic varieties of relative deprivation theory were proposed by Davies

(1962) and Gurr (1970), who have concentrated on people's comparisons with themselves at different points in time. People compare their current situation with either their past experiences or their future expectations. Objectively a group may be in a disadvantaged situation, but its members may feel that the situation has improved in comparison with the past. As a consequence, they may be satisfied. They will be more satisfied if they expect that the situation will continue to improve in the future. Indeed, both Davies and Gurr explain contention by citing people's growing concern that the experienced improvements will *not* continue. Davies' famous J-curve hypothesis and the various types of relative deprivation distinguished by Gurr are all about the concern that future outcomes will no longer meet expectations for the future.

An important conceptual distinction, that between individual and group relative deprivation, was introduced by Runciman (1966)—egoistic and fraternalistic deprivation, in Runciman's terminology. People (1) may feel personally deprived or (2) may feel that the group to which they belong is deprived. Research suggests that feelings of group relative deprivation increase the likelihood of collective behavior, whereas feelings of individual relative deprivation increase the likelihood of individual-level behavior (Martin 1986).

Later versions of relative deprivation theory (Crosby 1982; Muller 1980) introduced the concepts of deserved and entitled outcomes. The most recent versions (Atkinson 1986; Folger 1987; Masters and Smith 1987) attempt to build conceptual bridges to other social psychological approaches such as social comparison and social cognition. These versions try to resolve the ambiguities surrounding the choice of different bases of comparison.

In their review, Tyler and Smith (1998) suggest that sociological versions of relative deprivation theory have placed more emphasis on *intrapersonal* comparisons with the past or the future, whereas social psychological theories of relative deprivation emphasize *interpersonal* comparisons with other people or groups. Research suggests that people often prefer to make downward comparisons with people who are worse off in order to enhance or protect their own feelings of self-worth, rather than making upward comparisons with people who are better off, which can lead to feelings of relative deprivation (Tyler and Smith 1998). Therefore inequality often fails to generate grievances simply because people are not making the "right" comparisons (Major 1994).

Contrary to what Tyler and Smith suggest, time also plays a role in social psychological relative deprivation theories. These theories emphasize the significance of optimism: that is, grievances are reduced by the expectation that the situation will improve in the future. Results from laboratory studies provide evidence supporting this assumption (Folger 1987).

Hegtvedt and Markovsky (1995) point out that relative deprivation theory concentrates on a comparison of output without taking differences in input into account. Equity theory, however, proposes that outcomes are evaluated in terms of the associated input: people who have invested more should receive more. In fact, most people in Western societies believe that economic inequality is justified because they believe they live in a just world, where people deserve what they get and get what they deserve (Lerner 1980). Yet according to Hegtvedt and Markovsky (1995), the evaluator's position in society tempers the perceived fairness of equality. Individuals occupying lower positions in the stratification system seem less likely to judge inequality as fair; instead they favor a more equal distribution. Indeed, individuals in lower positions seem to prefer equality to equity, whereas individuals in higher positions seem to prefer equity to equality.

Procedural Justice

Perceived fairness of procedures is a core variable in theories of social justice (Tyler and Smith 1998; Tyler et al. 1997; for an application in the South African context, see Roefs, Klandermans, and Olivier 1998). These theories distinguish distributive justice from procedural justice. Distributive justice concerns the distribution of outcomes, whereas procedural justice concerns the procedure used for

distributing outcomes. Obviously, relative deprivation theory is about outcome distributions that are deemed unjust.

According to social justice theory, an important reason for considering outcome distributions unjust is that people doubt the fairness of the procedures employed to arrive at that distribution. People are more satisfied with a specific distribution of public goods if they regard the distribution procedures as fair. Thibaut and Walker (1975) argue that the key procedural characteristic shaping people's views about the fairness of procedures is the distribution of control between the parties. If people actually have been involved in the decision-making process, procedures are more likely to be deemed fair (Tyler and Lind 1992). Thus, for the South African case, we hypothesize that grievances are more likely to develop if people feel that they have no influence on the new authorities in South Africa.

Tyler and his colleagues (Tyler and Lind 1992; Tyler and Smith 1998), in their evaluation of the fairness of procedures, argue that people are not driven only by *instrumental* motives—that is, by the extent to which they have been able to influence the outcomes—but also by *relational* issues. Such issues include people's evaluation of the decision-making process as unbiased and honest, the trustworthiness of others in the relationship (in particular, authorities), and the degree to which people feel that they are respected. Evidence suggests that trustworthiness is typically the most important factor shaping evaluations of authorities (Tyler and Smith 1998): people seem to place great weight on their inferences about the motives and intentions of the authorities with whom they deal.

In the South African situation, this point leads us to hypothesize that grievance formation depends on the trustworthiness of the new authorities in the eyes of the people. Thus grievances will be more likely to develop in South Africa if people feel that the unequal distribution of outcomes between social groups results from procedures that they deem unfair. People's view of the fairness of procedures is affected by the extent to which they feel that they have been able to influence the new authorities, and by the degree to which they feel that the new authorities can be trusted.

Summary

Our brief tour of relative deprivation and social justice theory results in a few hypotheses about grievance formation. First, we assume that people will be aggrieved if they occupy a low position in society (Hyp. 1). Basically, this hypothesis proposes that objective conditions affect grievance formation.

Our second hypothesis capitalizes on the effect of comparison. We hypothesized that, *net* of the impact of objective conditions, comparison adds to the process of grievance formation: regardless of their objective situation, people will be aggrieved if (a) they feel that their situation is worse than that of others and/or (b) worse now than in the past, and/or (c) if they expect that it will not improve in the future (Hyp. 2a, 2b, 2c).

Our third hypothesis concerns the combined effect of objective conditions and comparisons. We hypothesize that the grievances generated by poor objective conditions will intensify if people feel (a) that they are worse off than others, *or* (b) that their situation has declined over the past few years, *or* (c) that their situation will not improve in the future (Hyp. 3a, 3b, 3c).

Our fourth hypothesis concerns the moderating effect of the evaluation of the government as the authority in control of distributing wealth in a society. We hypothesize that the grievances generated by poor objective conditions will intensify if people (a) don't trust government and/or (b) don't feel that they have an influence on government (Hyp. 4a, 4b).

In the remainder of this paper we test these hypotheses with data collected in South Africa between 1994 and 1998.

METHODS

Design

Annual surveys in random samples of the South African population have been conducted since 1994. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in people's homes by trained interviewers of the interviewees' ethnic back-

ground, who spoke their language. The interviews were based on structured questionnaires. The first interviews took place in February 1994, the period just before South Africa's first democratic elections. The subsequent waves of data were collected in March 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998. The five waves are based on separate samples of 2,286, 2,226, 2,228, 2,220 and 2,227 respondents respectively.

Respondents

The respondents were drawn by means of a multiple-stage cluster probability sample design. The population the sample was drawn from were all South African residents age 18 and older. We stratified the sample according to provinces[1] and by a classification of socioeconomic regions: tribal, traditional rural areas in former homelands; squatter areas; hostels, hotels, and boarding schools in urban areas both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan;[2] townships for coloreds, Indians, and Africans, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan; town and cities, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan; and rural areas excluding former homelands. The sampling allocation to these strata was made proportionally to the 1991 population figures, with a few exceptions: provinces were given a minimum of 120 respondents; the minimum number of Indians was fixed at 120; and we introduced an additional sub-sample for live-in domestic workers.[3]

As a consequence of the sampling procedures, unweighted results are not representative of the South African population. For our purposes, however, it is more important that the samples are drawn according to the same principles and thus are comparable. For that matter, the sampling design guarantees that the regional breakdowns of the samples are almost identical. The differences between the sampling design of the first survey and the latter four surveys, however, result in different proportions of Africans, coloreds, Indians, and whites in the first survey than in the latter four. Over-time comparisons of the samples' four racial groups on age, gender, and education reveal that these groups are similar as to gender, but slightly different in age and level of education. Yet MANOVAs with the key variables of our study as dependent variables (measures b, c, d, and e; see below) and with age, education, and time as factors reveal no significant interactions. Hence there is no indication that the observed age and educational differences between our samples explain the variation over time in these key variables.

Measures

a. *Demographics.* These measures are population group (African, colored, Indian, white), age, gender, education, income, employment status, occupation, language, and religion.

b. Outcome distribution. We developed a living standard measure based on the availability, in the household, of a variety of items ranging from electricity and running water to a microwave oven.

c. *Grievances.* We assessed grievances by asking our respondents how satisfied they were with their general personal situation, the neighborhood they live in, the job they have or their chances to get a job, the educational opportunities in their communities, their standard of living, the health care available, the recognition of their human rights, and the safety in the area where they live (answered on a seven-point scale ranging from "extremely dissatisfied" to "extremely satisfied"). We combined the eight questions into a scale of distributive grievances ranging from 1 ("not at all aggrieved") to 7 ("very much aggrieved") (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

d. *Relative deprivation and future expectations.* We asked our respondents (1) whether their general personal situation is better or worse than that of other people in

[1] The stratification for the African population was conducted differently for the first survey because at that time South Africa was still divided into former homelands and the rest of the country. In the first survey, we stratified the African sample into these areas and into metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The regional distribution of the 1994 sample is very similar to those of the later samples, however.

[2] Metropolitan areas are those around cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Pretoria. Nonmetropolitan areas surround the smaller cities.

[3] In the 1994 sample design, we stated no fixed minimum per region. Numbers were fixed, however, for the population groups: 1,252 Africans, 600 whites, 300 coloreds, and 200 Asians.

South Africa; (2) whether their general personal situation is better or worse than it was about five years ago; and (3) what they think their general personal situation will be five years from now. The questions were answered on a seven-point scale from 1 ("very much better") to 7 ("very much worse").

e. *Influence on and trust in authorities.* We assessed this variable with two questions. The first question tapped perceived influence on government: "Do you agree or disagree with the statement 'people like you can have an influence on governmental decisions'?" (on a seven-point scale ranging from "disagree very strongly" to "agree very strongly"). The second tapped trust in government: "How often do you trust the government to do what is right for people like you?" (never, seldom, sometimes, mostly, always). The two questions are correlated at $r = .36$.

RESULTS

Our first hypothesis states that people occupying a low position in society will be aggrieved. We have tested this hypothesis for race and class, the two main stratification criteria in South Africa.

Figure 1 maps the mean scores of the four racial categories on our grievance scale. In 1994 the four groups' relative positions were what one would expect: the Africans were the most aggrieved and the whites the least; the coloreds and the Indians occupied an intermediate position. After 1994, however, race became less important in explaining grievances: Africans became less aggrieved and whites became more aggrieved, while the relative position of the coloreds and Indians remained more or less stable. By 1998 the grievance levels of Africans, coloreds, and Indians were identical. Although whites were more aggrieved than in the past, they were still less aggrieved than any other group.[4]

Our findings for class are what one would expect and seem to be more stable. As our indicator of class, we used outcome distributions as indicated by income and living standard. The zero-order correlation between grievances (on the one hand) and income and living standard (on the other) remained fairly stable through the years and hovered around –.30. That is, the lower people's income and living standard, the more aggrieved they are. Not surprisingly, income and living standard are highly correlated: the correlations throughout the five years under study vary between .60 and .70. Because the results for income and for living standard are essentially the same, we restrict ourselves in the remaining analyses to living standard as our indicator of outcome distribution.

Even today, race and class are social categories that overlap strongly in South Africa. Our data also reveal this point unequivocally. In 1998, 42 percent of the variance in income and living standard was still explained by race; hence, we had to disentangle the effects of the two. To do so, we conducted regression analyses with race and class as the independent variables and grievances as the dependent variable.

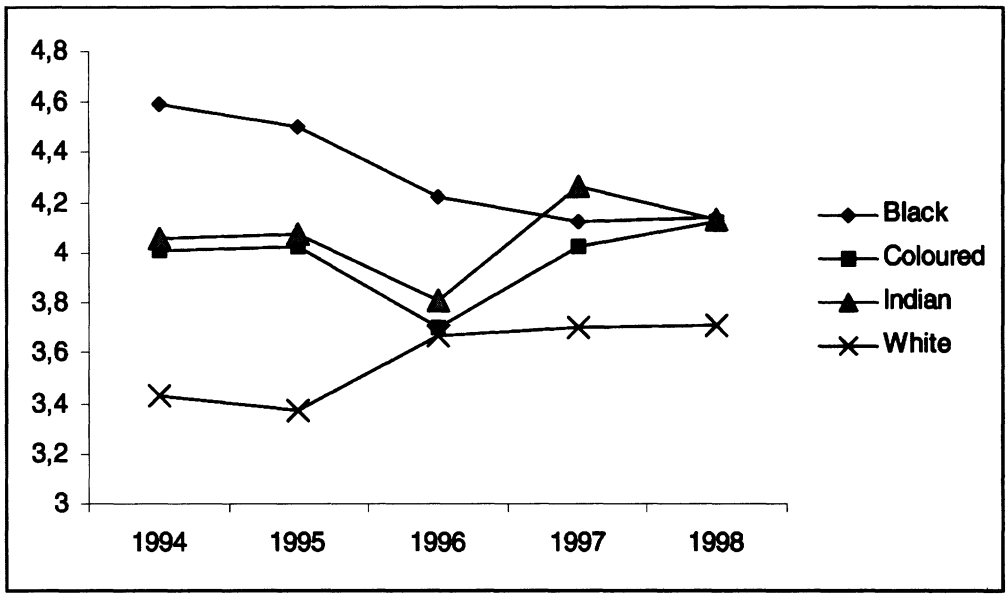
Table 1 presents the results of these regression analyses. Blacks, coloreds, and Indians are contrasted with white South Africans, and we employed living standard as our indicator for class. The pattern that emerges is extremely interesting. Over the five years under study, race became almost irrelevant, whereas living standard gained in significance. In 1994, race explained 23 percent of the variance in grievances while living standard explained nil, but these percentages were 3 percent and 6 percent respectively in 1998.[5]

Thus, net of race, living standard became *more* important over the years as a predictor of grievances. This is illustrated in Table 2, where the living standard measure is broken down into three levels: low, medium, and high.[6] The means are provided for distributive grievances for the racial categories at these

[4] Indeed, regression analyses revealed that the variance in grievances explained by race declined from 23 percent in 1994 to 3 percent in 1998. A two-way analysis of variance with time and race as factors revealed no main effect of time, a main effect of race ($F = 13.56$, df = 3, $p < .001$), and a significant interaction of race with time ($F = 23.91$, df = 12, $p < .001$).

[5] We checked these and all other regression analyses for normality, homoscedasticity, and excessively influential data points, applying SPSS residual statistics and plots. We found no problems in that regard.

[6] We broke down the total sample into three groups of approximately the same size.



Note. Dissatisfaction scores are based on a scale comprising levels of dissatisfaction with the neighborhood, employment, education, living standard, health care, human rights, and safety. A score of 1 means "very much satisfied"; a score of 7 means "very much dissatisfied."

Figure 1. Dissatisfaction

Table 1. Grievances Regressed on Race and Living Standard: Unstandardized Coefficients

	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
African	1.31	1.31	1.12	.96	.58	.31	.36	.07	.45	.00
	(.06)	(.07)	(.06)	(.08)	(.06)	(.07)	(.05)	(.06)	(.06)	(.08)
Colored	.68	.71	.62	.61	.26	.01	.40	.20	.36	.19
	(.08)	(.08)	(.10)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.07)	(.11)	(.06)
Indian	.71	.68	.68	.58	−.04	.28	.29	.33	.43	.27
	(.08)	(.08)	(.09)	(.10)	(.09)	(.09)	(.07)	(.09)	(.09)	(.11)
Living Standard		−.02		−.05		−.08		−.09		−.14
		(.02)		(.02)		(.01)		(.01)		(.01)
R^2	.23	.23	.18	.19	.07	.09	.02	.05	.03	.09

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

three levels for the first and the last year. In 1994, grievance levels were determined by racial categories, whereas living standard was less relevant. By 1998, it was the other way around: racial categories were less relevant and living standard made the difference.

Thus, after 1994, the *direct* effect of race on people's sense of grievances decreased; the *indirect* effect via living standard became more significant. In other words, race seems to be replaced by class. To be sure, class is linked closely to race, but class seems to have become more important than racial categorization in regard to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with outcome distributions. Grievances are now determined by "what people have" and no longer by "who they are."

In summary, the results confirm our first hypothesis. People who occupy lower positions in the South African society are more aggrieved than those in higher positions, although the impact of objective conditions on grievance formation has declined over the years. Our most important finding, however, concerns the changes in the relative signifi-

Table 2. Grievances: Race and Living Standard

	1994 Living Standard			1998 Living Standard		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
African	4.70	4.68	4.58	4.27	3.88	3.76
Colored	3.84	4.10	4.23	4.18	4.10	3.97
Indian	—	4.07	3.98	—	4.32	3.85
White	—	3.45	3.26	—	4.03	3.63

Note: Only very few Indians and whites report a low living standard.

cance of race and class. The objective conditions of living standard (class) have come to matter more than the objective conditions of political rights (race) in explaining a person's sense of grievance.

Intra- Versus Interpersonal Comparisons

Our second hypothesis links grievance formation to choice of comparison. We made a distinction between interpersonal comparison (comparison with others) and intrapersonal comparison (comparison over time). We assumed that net of the impact of objective conditions, people will be aggrieved if (a) they feel that their situation is worse than that of others and/or (b) worse now than in the past, and/or (c) if they fear that it will decline in the future. Each of these hypothesized effects was observed, as revealed by the regression analyses in Table 3.

In this table the three types of comparisons are entered in the equation in a second step after the effects of race and living standard have been determined. They add considerably to the variance in grievances explained, as the figures indicate. Obviously people feel aggrieved because they regard their situation as worse than that of others and/or worse than their own situation in the past, and/or because they expect that it will decline. Each of these comparisons contributes independently of the other comparisons to people's sense of grievance. All three effects are fairly stable. Together the three comparisons add some 30 percent to the variance in dissatisfaction explained by race and class in each equation.

Interpersonal comparisons, however, are far more important than intrapersonal comparisons. Apparently a sense of grievance about the distribution of outcomes is determined especially by the assessment that one's

Table 3. Grievances Regressed on Race, Living Standard, and Inter- and Intrapersonal Comparisons: Unstandardized Coefficients

	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
African	1.29	.85	.97	.91	.32	.46	.08	.22	.02	.19
	(.07)	(.06)	(.08)	(.06)	(.07)	(.07)	(.07)	(.06)	(.07)	(.06)
Colored	.71	.38	.63	.51	.02	.06	.13	.11	.19	.23
	(.08)	(.06)	(.09)	(.07)	(.09)	(.08)	(.07)	(.06)	(.09)	(.05)
Indian	.69	.48	.60	.50	.31	.32	.32	.25	.28	.26
	(.09)	(.07)	(.10)	(.08)	(.09)	(.08)	(.09)	(.08)	(.11)	(.05)
Living	.01	.01	−.04	.00	−.07	−.02	−.08	−.03	−.14	−.07
Standard	(.02)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Comparisons		.43		.36		.31		.29		.27
With Others		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)
Comparisons		.18		.15		.10		.08		.15
With the Past		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)
Expectations		−.00		.09		.07		.09		.13
for the Future		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)		(.02)
R^2	.23	.56	.19	.50	.09	.34	.05	.34	.09	.39

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

situation is worse than that of others and, to a lesser extent, by the assessment that the situation is worse now than five years ago or will decline in the next five years. This finding makes sense: grievance, as we assessed it, pertains to the *distribution* of outcomes in a society, and interpersonal comparisons obviously are more informative about that distribution than intrapersonal comparisons. Yet intrapersonal comparisons add explanatory power. Regardless of how their outcomes relate to those of others, people feel aggrieved if their position has declined in relation to the past or if they fear that it will decline in the future. On the other hand, people also feel more satisfied if their position has improved or if they expect it to improve, even if it is currently worse than that of comparison others.

Moderating Grievance Formation

The moderating effect of comparisons. Our third hypothesis concerns the moderating effects of inter- and intrapersonal comparison on grievance formation. We hypothesized that the outcomes of such comparisons may sharpen or soften someone's sense of grievance. That is, disappointing outcomes become even more disappointing if people believe that others are better off, or that current outcomes have declined, or that future outcomes will not improve.

To test these assumptions, we broke down the total sample on the basis of the scores for the three types of comparisons in groups of approximately the same size: (1) a group of people who feel that their situation is better than that of others, a group of people who feel that their situation is more or less the same as that of others, and a group of people who feel that their situation is worse than that of others; (2) a group of people who feel that their situation has improved from the past, a group who feel that their situation has remained more or less the same, and a group of people who feel that their situation has declined; and (3) a group of people who expect their situation to improve in the future, a group who expect that their situation will remain more or less the same, and a group who expect their situation to decline. We then conducted regression analyses for each group in each of the five years, with race and living standard as independent variables and grievances as dependent variable (Table 4). In this way we could assess whether the effect of objective conditions on grievance formation was moderated by the outcomes of comparisons.

Table 4 gives the R^2 values for race and for race and living standard. The relative size of these values for the three groups is important for our discussion, both within a given year and as they develop over time. Expectations for the future especially moderate the link between objective conditions and grievances: objective conditions continue to exert a considerable effect on grievances only for people who fear that their situation will decline. In fact, in 1998 the impact of race and class on grievances is higher than for the previous years. At the same time, objective conditions lose their influence on grievance formation among those who expect that their situation will improve. People who believe that their situation will remain the same occupy an intermediate position.

Comparisons with the past exert a similar but less dramatic effect, while interpersonal comparisons do not seem to matter. This suggests that a low position in society especially affects grievance formation among people who fear that their situation will not improve, and/or who find that it has not improved thus far. For all groups, the impact of living standard increases in relation to that of race. Apparently our earlier finding that class became more important than race holds in combination with the various outcomes of these comparisons.

Intrapersonal comparison (comparison of time) seems to moderate the formation of grievances, and to do so much more strongly than interpersonal comparison. Apparently quite a few South Africans feel that they are part of an ongoing process of change which has brought improvements in the past and is expected to continue doing so. The reverse is also true, of course: those who feel that they are in a climate of decline seem to translate their objective conditions more rapidly into grievances.

The moderating effect of beliefs about government. As we mentioned in our theoretical introduction, grievances may sharpen or soften for yet another reason. Procedures

Table 4. Race, Living Standard, and Grievances Moderated by Comparisons With Others and Comparison With the Past, and by Expectations for the Future: R^2 Values

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Comparison With Others					
Better:					
Race	.15	.14	.04	.01	.02
Race + liv. std.	.16	.14	.04	.01	.04
Same:					
Race	.22	.20	.09	.06	.01
Race + liv. std.	.22	.20	.09	.08	.05
Worse:					
Race	.05	.05	.03	.00	.01
Race + liv. std.	.05	.05	.03	.03	.05
Comparison With the Past					
Better:					
Race	.17	.12	.06	.03	.01
Race + liv. std.	.19	.12	.06	.03	.05
Same:					
Race	.33	.31	.13	.12	.07
Race + liv. std.	.34	.32	.13	.17	.11
Worse:					
Race	.21	.31	.13	.04	.09
Race + liv. std.	.22	.31	.13	.06	.15
Expectations for the Future					
Better:					
Race	.27	.12	.05	.02	.01
Race + liv. std.	.27	.12	.06	.02	.04
Same:					
Race	.38	.34	.19	.16	.06
Race + liv. std.	.38	.35	.19	.21	.10
Worse:					
Race	.20	.48	.19	.14	.25
Race + liv. std.	.20	.49	.20	.17	.30

that have led to the existing distribution of outcomes may be considered fair or unfair; depending on such evaluations, distributive justice may be evaluated more or less favorably. We assumed that people's evaluation of authorities influences their assessment of their situation. Perceived influence on authorities and trustworthiness are two important aspects of such an evaluation: Authorities who are perceived to be open to influence attempts and to be trustworthy supposedly make people more optimistic about the future (Tyler and Lind 1992).

We begin our discussion of the results with the latter assumption. Indeed, trust in government and perceived influence over government are related to future expectations (Table 5).

The more positively people evaluate the South African government, the more optimistic they are about the future. The correlations for expectations about the future are considerably higher than those for relative deprivation, based on comparisons with others. They are also higher than those for relative deprivation, based on comparisons with the past, but here the differences are smaller. Comparisons of trust and influence reveal that trust has the stronger relationship to expectations for the future. This confirms Tyler and Lind's (1992) observation that trustworthiness is the most important factor shaping evaluations of authorities.

Apparently, trust in and influence over government are more relevant for comparisons over time than for comparisons with others; of the two comparisons over time (comparisons with the past and expectations for the future), future expectations are influenced more strongly. Trust in authorities is like a blank check, as Barnes and Kaase (1979) remarked. It is the feeling that one's interests receive attention even if the authorities are subject to little supervision or scruti-

Table 5. Comparison With Others and With the Past, and Expectations for the Future, with Trust in Government and Influence on Government: Pearson's *r*s

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Trust in Government					
Others	–.20	–.11	–.16	–.09	–.11
Past	–.16	–.19	–.30	–.22	–.22
Future	–.09	– .35	–.39	–.34	–.39
Influence on Government					
Others	–.03	–.06	–.14	–.11	–.05
Past	–.07	–.15	–.19	–.17	–.15
Future	–.13	–.25	–.29	–.29	–.17

ny. Such trustworthiness makes people optimistic about the future, and such optimism, as we noted in our previous section, softens current distributive grievances.

Do trust and influence also moderate the relationship between living standard and distributive grievances, as our fourth hypothesis suggests? Table 6 reports results from analyses that address this question. For these analyses we executed a median split to create two groups that were high and low on both trust and influence. For these groups, again, we conducted regression analyses with race and living standard as independent variables and grievances as the dependent variable.

The R^2 values largely confirm our expectations: correlations are higher if trust and influence are low than if trust and influence are high. The first year is the exception: in 1994 we found the reverse pattern. That was a volatile year, however. Our interviews were conducted in the months before the elections, the old government was still in place, and nobody knew what the elections would bring. In those days of uncertainty, half of our respondents feared that their situation would decline, whereas the other half was divided approximately equally between people who expected everything to stay the same and people who expected their situation to improve. Under these circumstances, expectations about the future acquired a different meaning, related much more closely to the country's political future and much less closely to individual outcomes.

For the remaining four years, R^2 values for those who trust government or feel that they can influence government are considerably lower than for those who do not trust government and who do not feel able to influence government. In other words, objective conditions are more likely to lead to grievances if people do not trust government or feel that they have no influence on government. Also in these analyses, the effect of living standard gradually replaces that of race.

Table 6. Race, Living Standard, and Grievances Moderated by Trust in Government and Influence on Government: R^2 Values

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Trust in Government					
Low					
Race	.17	.29	.09	.09	.08
Race + liv. std.	.17	.29	.11	.13	.14
High					
Race	.27	.17	.09	.02	.03
Race + liv. std.	.28	.17	.10	.04	.07
Influence on Government					
Low					
Race	.17	.24	.10	.07	.06
Race + liv. std.	.17	.26	.11	.11	.15
High					
Race	.27	.15	.06	.02	.02
Race + liv. std.	.27	.15	.08	.02	.04

CONCLUSIONS

Our study has produced interesting results. First, we found that racial categorization has lost its relevance for the formation of grievances, despite its unabated significance for differences in living standards. In 1998, 42 percent of the variance in living standard still could be explained by racial categories. In the explanation of a sense of grievance, however, race was replaced by class as indicated by income and living standard. The direct effect of race disappeared and was replaced by an indirect effect via class.

Second, net of objective conditions interpersonal and intrapersonal comparisons were shown to be important for the formation of grievances, explaining 30 percent of the variance in grievances. Of the two types, interpersonal comparison appeared to be by far the more important. In regard to moderating effects, however, intrapersonal comparisons (especially expectations for the future) were more important. Being worse off than a comparison other generates a strong sense of grievance, but occupying a low position also generates a sense of grievance, especially if such a position is due to a decline from past circumstances and/or is unlikely to improve in the near future.

Third, trust in government and perceived influence on government affect comparisons over time (intrapersonal comparison), but not comparisons with others (interpersonal comparison). The more people trust government, and the more they feel able to influence government, the more they feel that they have improved their situation over the past five years and the greater their optimism about the future.

Fourth, trust in government and perceived influence on government moderate the translation of low outcomes into grievances. Among people who do not trust government or who feel unable to influence the government, chances are high that low outcomes will generate a sense of grievance. On the other hand, among those who are high in trust and perceived influence, low outcomes are less likely to result in grievances.

Obviously the racial cleavage did not disappear in South Africa; nobody would have expected it to do so in only a few years (Marais 1998). Our findings, however, suggest that the racial cleavage no longer defines people's sense of grievance. Grievances now are related more closely to actual income and living standard—in other words, to social class. Of course, class coincides with race, but over the years class also has become more important as a distinction within race. This distinction has gained significance for the explanation of grievances.

The transition from race to class as a determinant of distributive grievances is an intriguing phenomenon. Indeed, one could argue that the South African society has begun to normalize. A sense of grievance about the distribution of wealth in society is now determined less by apartheid's racial categorization and more by the actual distribution of wealth in the country. The importance of objective conditions for grievance formation declined over the years, however. Certainly, class has become more important, but not important enough to compensate for the declining impact of race.

Grievances not only are formed by objective conditions such as race or class, but also depend on the comparisons made in assessing the objective situation. In fact, the effect of comparisons by far outweighs the effect of objective conditions. The subjective component of grievance formation, as determined by comparison, played an important role in the formation of grievances throughout the whole period. Regardless of the objective conditions, comparisons suggesting that one is worse off than others or worse off than in the past, or the expectation that one's situation will be worse in the future, are powerful generators of grievances. The outcomes of such comparisons explain a considerable proportion of the variance in grievances; in addition, comparisons (especially comparisons over time) moderate the translation of objective conditions (whether caused by race or by class) into grievances.

The choice of basis for comparison makes a difference. Comparison with others (interpersonal comparison) has a strong direct impact on people's sense of grievance, much stronger than comparison over time (intrapersonal comparison with past or future). Comparisons over time, however, are much stronger moderators than comparison

with others. Apparently it is easier to cope with a low position that results from an improvement over the past than with a low position that has stayed the same or even is worse than in the past. Similarly, a low position that is expected to improve is easier to cope with than a low position that is expected to stay the same or even to decline further. Thus, depending on the choice of basis for comparison, it is not only the evaluation of the situation that varies; the dynamics of grievance formation vary as well.

With inequalities of the size that one finds in South Africa, comparisons can easily generate high levels of relative deprivation either directly or indirectly. Depending on the kind of comparisons made, this reaction can be politically dangerous if people feel that the group they identify with is disadvantaged. On the other hand, large proportions of the population—especially the African population—are optimistic about the future, trust their government, and believe they can influence its decisions. That attitude makes it easier to cope with low outcomes. If people feel that the authorities have their hearts in the right place, they are not only more prepared to accept the existing situation but also inclined to believe that it will improve. After all, they believe, government is doing its utmost to change the situation. That belief, in its turn, makes it easier to live with the current situation. For that matter, it is helpful that the Africans—who objectively are the most deprived—are the most optimistic and the most positive about the government.

Findings like these raise a question: how long will the disadvantaged maintain their trust in government and their optimism? That depends on the extent to which the government actually can improve their situation. Our findings suggest two possible scenarios.

In the first, the government works to reduce inequality. In doing so, it not only reduces dissatisfaction—because fewer people feel deprived—but also makes itself more trustworthy and creates more optimism about the future. These feelings in turn make more bearable the inequality that continues to exist.

In the second scenario, the government fails to reduce inequality, forfeits trust, and makes people pessimistic about the future. This combination of inequality, lack of trust, and pessimism intensifies dissatisfaction. Let us recall the classic scenario that Davies projected with his J-curve of the improvements which make people expect that their situation will continue to improve. This scenario may materialize if the government fails to deliver what it promised.

These findings suggest the continued relevance of relative deprivation theory and social justice theory—or, more generally, grievance theory—for the social movement domain. Provided that more sophisticated conceptualizations, measurements, and analyses are employed, relative deprivation still is relevant for understanding political protest. To be sure, grievances are not sufficient conditions for the occurrence of protest. On the other hand, people who are protesting *are* aggrieved. Understanding how such grievances are formed remains a constructive endeavor.

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Marlene Roefs *is affiliated with the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria, South Africa. She works on a variety of policy orientated sociopolitical research projects. Her PhD thesis examines the dynamics of social identity, social comparison, and social justice in public participation in South Africa.*

Bert Klandermans *is Professor of Applied Social Psychology at the Free University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The emphasis in his work is on the social psychological consequences of social, economic, and political change. He has published extensively on the social psychology of participation in social movements and labor unions. He is the editor of* Social Movements, Protest and Contention, *and a book series published by the University of Minnesota Press.* The Social Psychology of Protest *appeared with Blackwell in 1997.*

Johan Olivier *was recently Acting Research Director at the Human Sciences Research Council. He is currently a management consultant at the South African Ministry of Finance, where he is responsible for a series of development/transformation projects that are being implemented by the South African government. His research interests are in the areas of social change, safety and security, civil society, and social movements. He holds a PhD from Cornell University.*