



UNIVERSITY  
OF NATAL  
**CASS**  
DURBAN

BLACK ATTITUDES TOWARDS MULTIRACIAL  
BEACHES IN DURBAN -

A Preliminary Investigation Among  
Residents and Holidaymakers

Valerie Møller, Themba Nzimande and  
Lawrence Schlemmer

February 1982

**COMMUNICATIONS OF THE**  
**CENTRE FOR APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**SENTRUM VIR TOEGEPASTE MAATSKAPLIKE WETENSKAPPE**  
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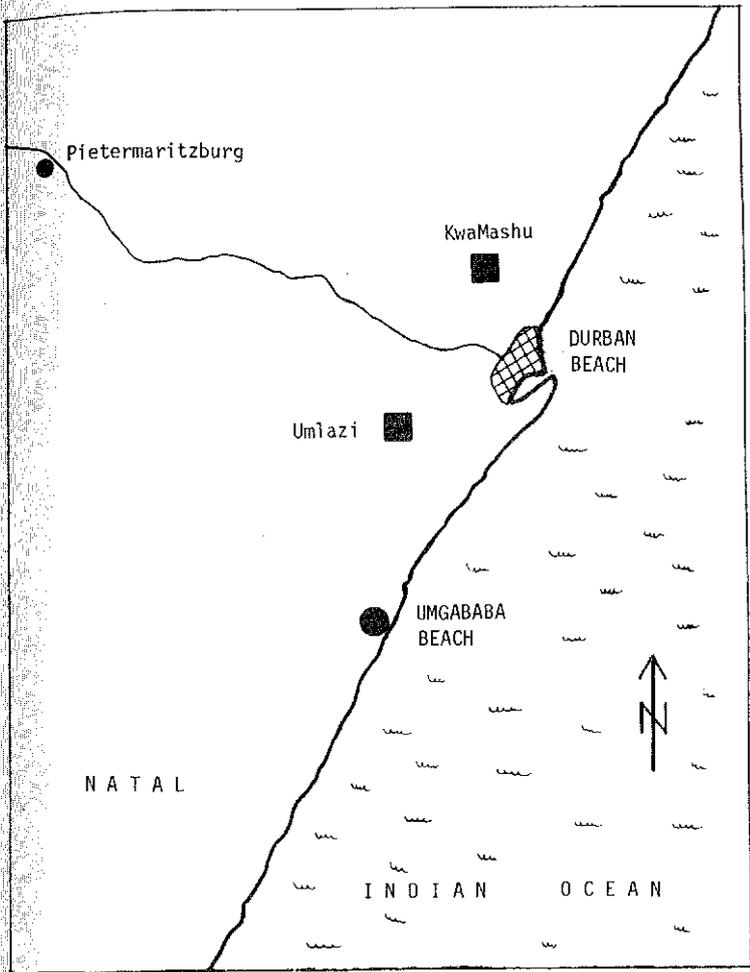


Figure 1 Situation plan: The Durban and Umgababa Beaches.

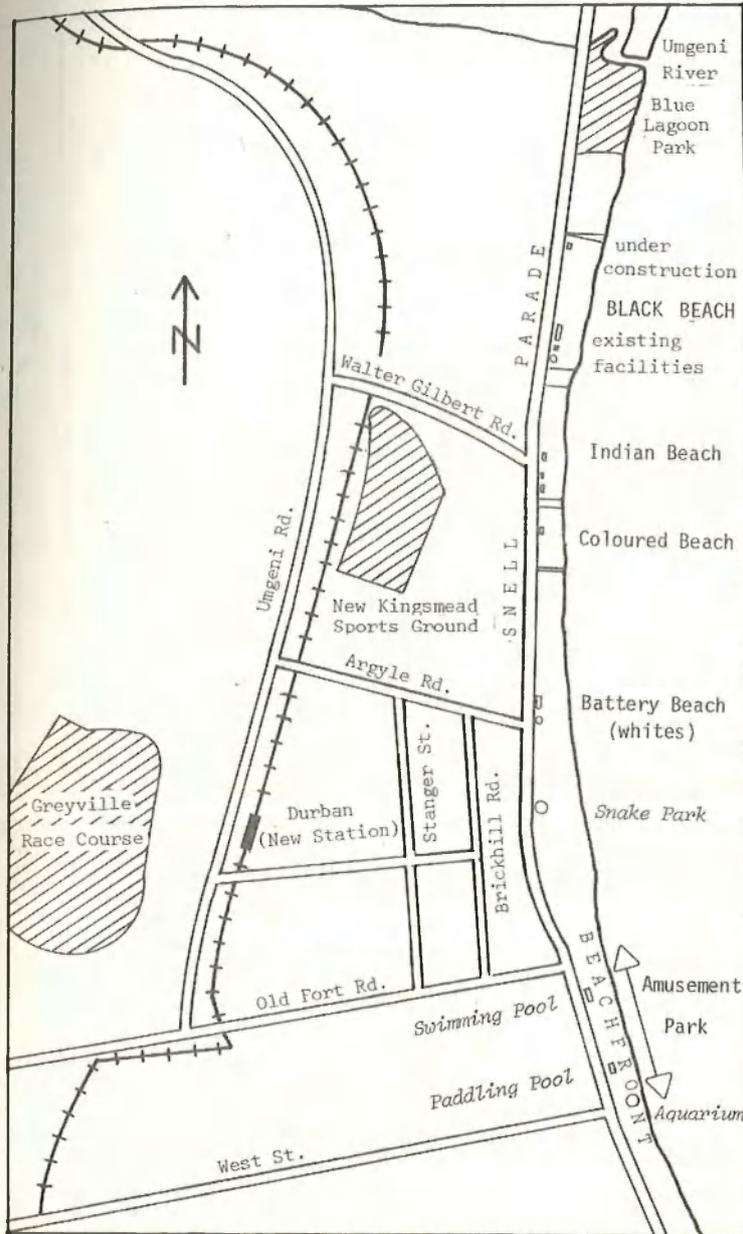


Figure 2 Map of the Durban Beach and vicinity: The site of the black section of the Durban Beach in relation to other landmarks.

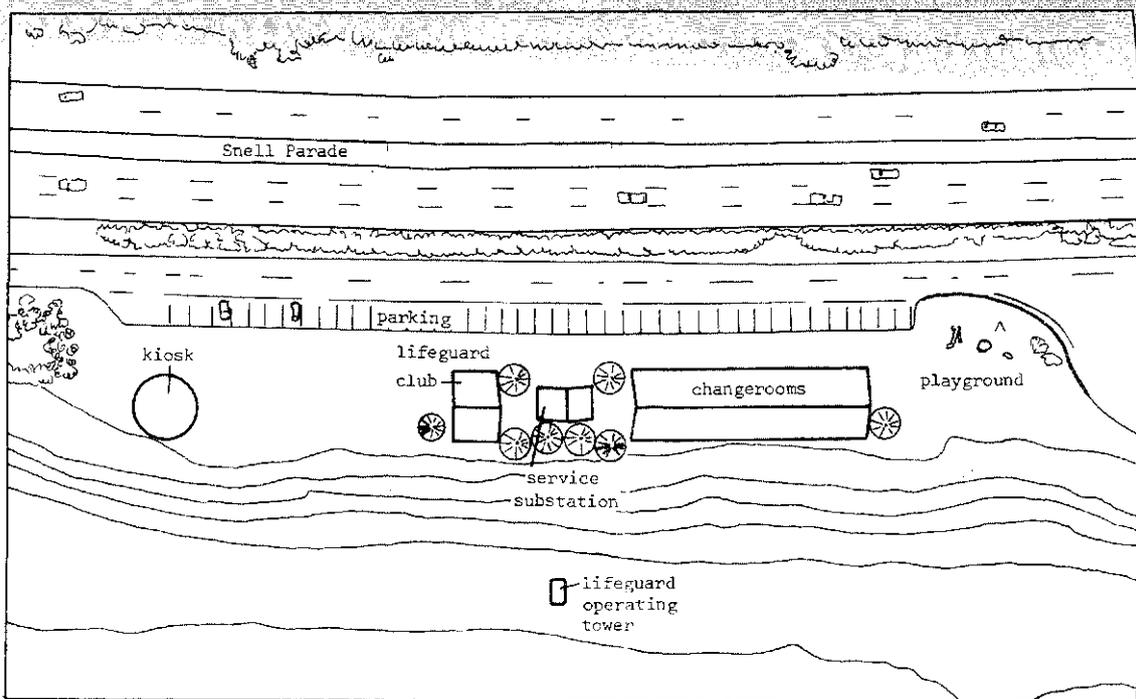


Figure 3 Bird's eye view of facilities on the black section of the Durban Beach.

Field Report - Sketchplan Umgababa

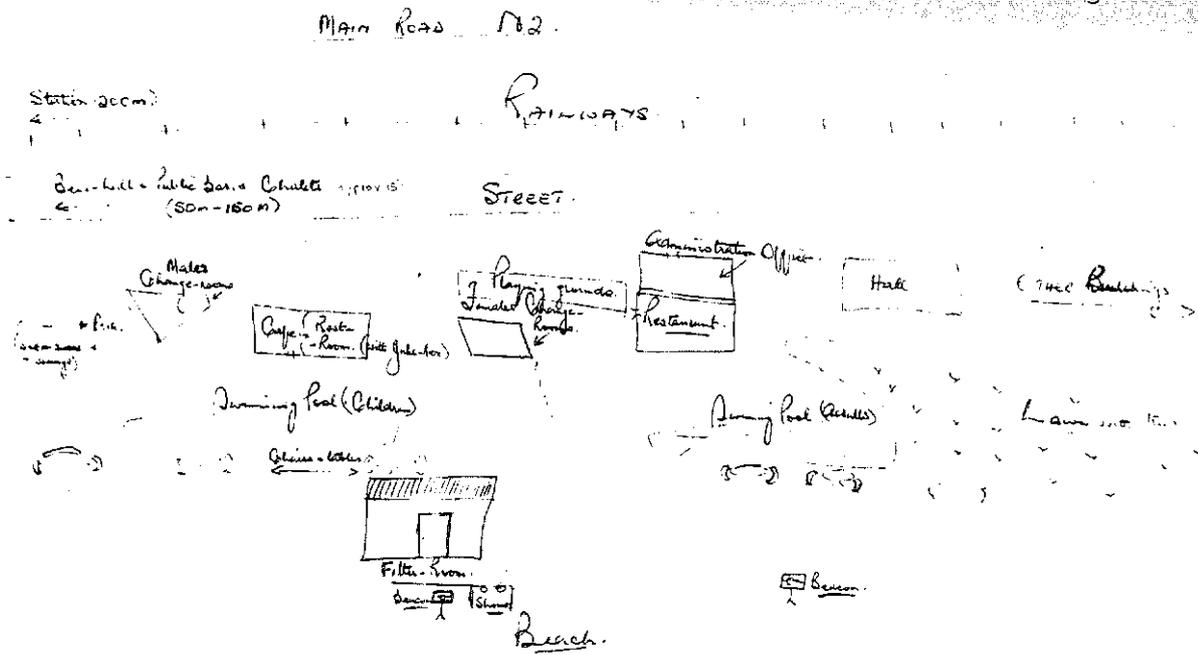


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## CHAPTER 1.

### INTRODUCTION.

Durban is considered South Africa's premier seaside resort: Hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the country and abroad are attracted to its beaches annually. The city derives its image from the sea and the beaches and is highly dependent on the tourist industry for its income. Consequently, local policy-makers constantly watch over the situation of the Durban beaches as the city needs to preserve its major asset. The means whereby the attractiveness of the Durban beaches and the Golden Mile, as the built-up section of the beachfront is commonly referred to, are regularly reviewed. This with a view to preserving Durban's image as a seaside resort among residents and visitors alike. In the past the question of how best to promote the Durban beaches has frequently led to heated debate and achieving consensus on this contentious issue has not always been easy.

In more recent times the emergence of a new user group has led to further considerations when evaluating the attractiveness of Durban beaches. The City Council has become increasingly concerned with the quantity and quality of bathing and beachfront facilities for non-white residents and holidaymakers. In the late 1970's new beach facilities were erected for members of the Coloured, Indian and African communities along the Snell Parade in Durban. At the time of writing (January 1982), practical steps have been taken to provide multiracial toilets next to the amusement park on the beachfront which is effectively used by members of all race groups. This despite the fact that restaurants on the beachfront do not cater for non-white patrons and 'whites only' signs are posted at the amusement park.

In a recent debate the Durban City Council has also considered opening a section of the Durban beachfront to people of all races (*The Daily News*, October 14, 1981; *Natal Mercury*, November 25, 1981). Similarly, a member of the Provincial Council has issued a strong appeal to local authorities south of Durban to provide more

beach facilities for blacks on the south coast of Natal (*The Daily News, The Natal Mercury*, November 25, 1981). However, the provision of more beach facilities for blacks is considered a nascent problem. It is envisaged that although the demand for beach facilities among blacks may be relatively small at present, demands are likely to increase rapidly. Arguing along these lines, one might suggest that the issue of increased access to beaches and beach facilities should be regarded as an item on the 'forward planning' agenda. As such, it is an issue which should be carefully considered by all interested groups involved, including black users.

To date, popular opinion regarding issues which affect the quality of the beach environment for Durban residents have only been sounded among the white sector of the population. For example, a pilot study conducted among 355 residents of Durban (reported on in a series of articles entitled "This is Your City" in the *Natal Mercury* in August 1981) probed the attitudes and opinions concerning a number of environmental issues including ones which affected Durban's beaches and its general image. According to survey findings, the quality of the environment was a general concern shared by all types of respondents represented in the study. However, graduate respondents tended to take a particularly strong pro-conservation stand with respect of the more controversial issues.

The Director of the Natal Mercury Study regretted not being in a position to undertake an opinion survey among all sectors of the Durban population. For various reasons the survey had to concentrate on only one group and the municipal voters, who were all white at the time of the survey, represented an obvious choice (*Natal Mercury*, August 12, 1981).

Obviously, black opinion on the beach environment is necessary, if the Council is to formulate a beach policy which will ensure that Durban retains its attractive image in future. At this point it should be mentioned that Durban's beaches and the beachfront are undoubtedly of significance to blacks. According to an earlier survey conducted among residents of Kwa Mashu and Umlazi, the sea

featured as one of the most prominent characteristics of the City of Durban.<sup>1)</sup> Durban as a seaside resort was one of three basic images of Durban held by the respondent group; other strong images depicted Durban as a consumer market and work centre. Survey respondents also identified the sea as a powerful force which contributed significantly to physical and spiritual well-being. Visits to the beach and to the beachfront were one of five major types of activities in which the respondents wished to participate more frequently in their leisure time.

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1) Chapter 10.4: 'Images of Durban' in Valerie Møller and Lawrence Schlemmer: *Quantity or Quality? A Survey Evaluation of Housing in Relation to the Quality of South African Black Township Life*, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Natal, Durban 1981.

CHAPTER 2.THE SURVEY.

In this memorandum the results of a more recent survey conducted among blacks which focussed exclusively on the issue of beaches are reviewed. A series of loosely structured interviews were held with blacks in and around Durban at the beginning of the bathing season in late 1981. The interviews were conducted by a black male member of the research team who worked in close collaboration with the other researchers. The fieldworker, who is also one of the authors of the study, worked with an interview guideline on which the topics to be covered in the course of an informal conversation were listed. It was left to his discretion to introduce new topics and if necessary to omit items on the guideline which might have interfered with the normal flow of a casual conversation. As the fieldworker became more familiar with the issues under review, new topics were introduced into the interview guideline and some points which had been clarified were dropped.

Weather permitting, the interviews were conducted on the beach during the period 22nd October through 16th November 1981. Fieldwork was carried out mainly on days late in the week and over weekends. Only when the weather was exceptionally favourable were interviews conducted early in the week.

During the first part of the interview period, fieldwork was conducted on the Durban African Beach,<sup>1)</sup> in the latter part on Umgababa Beach. As the study commenced in early summer, the beaches were not particularly crowded and the fieldworker, who posed as a bather, found it easy to single out beachgoers and involve them in a casual conversation.

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1) Significantly there are no uniform and standard designations for the sections of the Durban beach set aside for non-white users. In this report we shall for the sake of clarity or convenience refer to the black beach or to the African (Bathing) Beach, the latter in accordance with the sign displayed in public view on the Durban beach facilities provided for blacks.

The majority of persons approached were willing to be interviewed, although a number of enthusiastic bathers spent so much time in the water that the interviewer found it difficult to involve them in an interview.

On rainy days some interviews were conducted with people in their private homes and in public shopping areas. Additional information was also obtained from several individuals whose work gave them special insight into the activities of beachgoers: these included lifeguards, hotel personnel, and a beach photographer,

CHAPTER 3.THE SAMPLE.

The intention was to survey a wide range of black adults interested in pursuing recreational activities on the beaches. No specific sampling frame was employed, but the fieldworker was instructed to approach adults of both sexes, of various age groups, social ranking and place of residence for interviews. With the single exception of one woman who expressed complete lack of interest in leisure pursuits on the beach, all respondents had had some personal experience of visiting a beach, some for the first time in their lives immediately prior to being interviewed. Obviously, the sampling method used in the survey could not yield a sample which was representative of the beachgoing population among blacks. Nevertheless, the inclusion of sufficiently high numbers of persons in various social categories made feasible a preliminary analysis of opinions within specific sectors of the black population.

In all, 78 interviews were conducted with 48 men and 30 women. Half of the surveyed persons were aged 30 years or less. An occupational classification was obtained from some 90 percent of persons interviewed. Of these approximately one-fourth were working in unskilled jobs, 15 percent in semi-skilled jobs and just over one-fourth in supervisory or white collar jobs. Some 15 percent of the sample were scholars. Approximately one-third of the interviews respectively were conducted on the Durban African Beach, the Umgababa Beach and in Umlazi Township. Three-quarters of the sample comprised local residents of Greater Durban and adjacent districts, and one-quarter visitors to Durban from other areas in Natal and Southern Africa.

CHAPTER 4.THE BEACHES OBSERVED IN THE STUDY.

Interviews were conducted on two beaches which are specifically designated as black beaches. The African Bathing Beach in Durban was an obvious choice, because opinions concerning the introduction of a multi-racial beach in Durban were to be assessed. For control purposes, a second beach, Umgababa Beach, was included in the survey.

4.1 The African Bathing Beach on Snell Parade is the last of a series of four beaches reserved for the use of members of a particular race group. Public facilities in use on the African Bathing Beach at the time of the survey include changerooms with showers and toilets, and a kiosk. There are a few benches in the vicinity of the changerooms. Swings, a slide and a merry-go-round are provided for children. A small lawn has been planted outside the changerooms facing the road. Lifeguards are on duty at regular times. Access by car is achieved by moving off the Snell Parade onto a subsidiary road which runs parallel to the main road or by following a circuitous route which serves the Blue Lagoon park and beach area. Parking is provided on this subsidiary road. In 1976 some of the facilities on this section of the beach formerly used by members of the Indian community were transferred to African use and new changerooms were erected. At the time of writing (January 1982) additional changerooms are in the process of being built on a site further down the African Beach towards the Blue Lagoon area.

Access to the African Bathing Beach for township residents using public transport involves changing trains or buses and a long walk. For example, persons travelling from Umlazi by train will arrive at the New Durban Station, and will then have to take a bus to the Kings Park Area and then walk along Walter Gilbert Road to the beach. The majority of Kwa Mashu beachgoers will take a bus from their township which brings them to Kings Park and will follow a similar route to the beach. Throughout the year buses drop black passengers in the vicinity of the Pine Street and Argyle Road/Brickhill

Road bus ranks. Beachgoers will then have to walk along the Snell Parade past three separate beaches until they finally reach the African Bathing Beach. In most cases, black beachgoers using public transport will be required to walk twenty to forty minutes. Only over major holidays are special buses provided which serve the beaches directly.

The African Bathing Beach also serves black holidaymakers staying at the 'international' hotels on the beachfront. These hotels are situated on the 'Golden Mile' section of the beachfront. However, the closest 'international' hotel is no less than some fifteen to twenty minutes walking distance from the African Bathing Beach.

For the sake of brevity the African Bathing Beach in Durban will simply be referred to as the 'Durban Beach' in this report whenever it is compared to Umgababa Beach.

4.2 The Umgababa Beach is a black holiday resort situated on the South Coast of Natal some 40 km. from Durban. It is the only well-appointed resort for the sole use of blacks in Natal. The holiday resort is run by the KwaZulu Development Corporation. Small parties can be accommodated in holiday chalets consisting of a bedroom, a lounge and a kitchen. There is also accommodation for larger groups of visitors such as school classes, social clubs, sports groups, etc. Refreshments and meals are served in a spacious restaurant. A cafe serves beachgoers and local residents. The youth in the neighbourhood is particularly attracted to the jukebox which is housed in the cafe. There are two public bars. Bottled beer is sold in one of the bars. In the other bar liquor and African beer are also available. Each bar is equipped with a television set. In the evenings and particularly over weekends entertainment such as film shows and discotheques are provided at the resort. Sports facilities at the resort include tennis courts, trampolines, and indoor games. There is a paddling pool for young children and a swimming pool for adults. Lawn and shrubs create a pleasant backdrop for the pool area. Picnic tables are provided for day-visitors and

9.

changeroom facilities for casual bathers. A lifeguard is on duty on the beach.

Umgababa Beach is served by a rail line, and a railway station is situated right next to the resort. Access by car is gained on the Southern Freeway. It is estimated that the distance between Umlazi and Umgababa Beach can be covered in a half an hour by car and in an hour by public transport.

CHAPTER 5.SURVEY FINDINGS.5.1 How blacks use the beaches.

5.1.1 Typical visiting patterns. The impression was gained from survey findings that a day on the beach is a special occasion, to which the majority of township blacks will look forward during the summer months. However, only one-fifth of the local respondents said they visited the beach frequently and in regular intervals. The majority of these regular beachgoers worked on the beachfront or, in the case of Umgababa Beach, lived nearby. This type of user was most likely to go to the beach on his or her own (cf. Table 1). Some 40 percent of the local respondents in the survey reported that they went to the beach several times during the summer season. According to respondents, the peak period for visiting the beach is during the Christmas holiday season. A family outing or a visit to the beach with a peer group at this time of year was a popular social event. In particular, it was customary for blacks to go to the beach on New Year's Day. Images of the Durban beaches crowded by holiday-makers tended to be foremost on the minds of those respondents who associated beach visits with an outing on New Year's Day.

The survey revealed that blacks tended to consider the beach to be one of Durban's major attractions. Many respondents indicated that local blacks would take their visitors to see the sea as a matter of course. Some respondents intimated that they rarely went to the beach except when they accompanied their visitors.

Although numbers are small, the survey data tentatively suggest that persons who sometimes went to the beach on their own visited the beach more often than persons who went to the beach exclusively with family or friends. Although fewer women than men in the survey said they went to the beach on their own, this difference was not statistically significant.

As for the visitors to Durban included in the sample, a

trip to the beach was frequently one of a large variety of holiday activities. However, some respondents said they had come to Durban specifically to spend time on the beach. Members of excursion groups accounted for a large proportion of non-local beachgoers. For example, it was observed that coaches carrying busloads of tourists might stop for just a few hours on the beach before moving to the next destination. In some cases school children living in other areas of Natal were brought by their teachers to spend a day on the beach.

Table 1.

Visiting patterns.

Percentage respondents who usually went to the beach:

	Local residents %	Visitors %	Total* %
Alone	22	17	21
With family	25	11	21
With friends	51	33	46
With an organisation	<u>2</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>12</u>
	100	100	100
*Adjusted percentages	N = 49	N = 18	N = 67

5.1.2 Transport. The majority of the local survey respondents said they relied on public transport to get to the beach. In terms of accessibility, Umgababa Beach was considered conveniently situated next to a railway station. By contrast, the Durban Beach was thought to be relatively inaccessible for commuters using public transport. The impression was also gained from the survey that some black bathers approaching the African Bathing Beach along the Snell Parade felt annoyed and even humiliated at having to walk past three other beaches until they reached the one reserved for blacks.<sup>1)</sup>

1) In this connection it might be noted that the section of the beach reserved for use by black bathers prior to the erection of the present African Bathing Beach after 1975 was situated adjacent to the Battery Beach used by whites. However, no specific mention of the resiting of the African Bathing Beach in the recent past was made by the respondents.

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By and large, public transport was used mainly by the younger persons in the survey and by those who went to the beach on their own. Survey data also suggested that private transport might be arranged for special excursions such as annual family outings, sightseeing with visitors, or trips to the beach on New Year's Day.

In reply to questions concerning transport problems, some beachgoers reported that they had experienced few difficulties because they had only visited the beaches during the holiday season when public transport was freely available. However, respondents patronising the Durban Beach at other times of the year were likely to encounter transport problems.

5.2 Beach attractions. The study revealed that the majority of beachgoers go to the beach to swim and have fun, and to relax. As we have seen, beach visits tend to be social occasions, in particular for those beachgoers who take to the sea during the holiday season. It is noteworthy that having fun included playing games and taking rides in the amusement parks on the beaches. Many respondents reported that they liked to cool off on the beach on warm days: the water and the sea breezes were refreshing. Other respondents stated that they were content to sit back and watch others have fun. However, only one respondent was sufficiently bold to say he was mainly interested in watching the women in their bikinis!

For visitors to Durban who come from afar, a visit to the beach is often imperative. As one survey respondent who originated from inland Natal explained to the interviewer: "*Once you are around Durban, you must see the sea.*" Many respondents, particularly those who were on the beach for the first time in their lives stated they were fascinated by the sea and watched the waves come in for long periods of time. In fact, some few participants in the survey never ventured into the water, but preferred to relax on the shore and enjoy the cool sea breezes.

The activities which beachgoers typically pursue when on the beach are listed in Table 2.

Table 2.

Beach attractions.Percentage respondents indicating beach attractions.

	<u>%*</u>
Swimming, cooling off in the sea	42
Having fun	31
Relaxing on the beach	24
Social aspects	20
The sea view, the sea breezes	14
Medicinal, mystical properties of seawater	11
The sea as a fascinating natural phenomenon	10
Family outing	5
Jogging, walk along the seashore	2
Swimming pool (Umgababa)	2
Picnicing	2

N = 78

\* Percentages add up to over 100% because multiple responses were given in some cases.

5.3 Typical categories of beachgoers. Survey results reviewed so far indicate that the beach most probably holds many attractions for different interest groups such as bathers and non-bathers, locals and visitors. In this study we were particularly interested in identifying the dominant social characteristics of typical black beachgoers. An inquiry into this topic was conducted in a small subgroup of the respondents.

The majority of the persons in this subgroup were of the opinion that all types of persons came to the beach, and this supposition was confirmed by the observations of the fieldworker. Some respondents intimated that there might be a tendency for younger persons and the more sophisticated and affluent members of the community to make greater use of the beaches. It was pointed out that transport costs were prohibitive even for local township people wishing to spend a day on the beach: *"The poor cannot even afford the transport costs to the beach."*

It stands to reason that the less affluent type of visitor will only be able to afford a holiday at the sea if he or she can stay with friends or relatives. However, it appeared that in some cases popular group tours which included a visit to the sea in their itinerary might create new opportunities for the average black to visit the beach.

To a certain degree, beach activities are most likely to be the special domain of the young. One beachgoer estimated to be in his fifties remarked that it was uncommon for blacks of his age to be on the beach: *"People of my age are not made to feel very welcome on the beaches. They're looked at as if they did not deserve such fun."*

Survey findings tended to support this view. Among the Durban-based respondents, reported frequencies of beach visits decreased significantly with age. Twenty-seven percent of the under-thirties, but only 15 percent of the over-thirties said they visited the beach at least once a month. And only 5 percent of the under-thirties, but 23 percent of the over-thirties indicated they visited the beach less often than once a year.

As might be expected, younger persons tended to place greater emphasis on swimming and having fun and on the social aspects of beach visits, whilst older persons tended to enumerate less active recreational pursuits such as enjoying the sea breezes and the view, and collecting seawater.

One regular observer of beach activities in the sample made a clear distinction between locals and visitors to Durban. According to this respondent, most people from the nearby townships and surrounding areas came to the beach relatively frequently because they enjoyed swimming or wished to relax on the shore. By contrast visitors from afar tended to come to the beach only once or twice a year, mainly because they believed in the power of seawater.

However, there was little support for this supposition in our data. Although numbers were small, the belief in the mystical or medicinal quality of seawater tended to be equally distributed

among the locals and the visitors to Durban, and there was no statistical relationship between frequency of beach visits and this type of belief. Nevertheless, the research team decided to probe more deeply into this belief.

5.4 Mystical and sanative properties of the sea. It will be remembered that just over 10 percent of the survey respondents named such properties as a beach attraction. Is it correct to assume that some people go to the beach specifically to benefit from the mystical and healing powers of the sea?

In order to shed more light on this topic, a special inquiry was conducted in a subgroup of the sample. It was discovered that the belief in the cleansing and healing qualities of seawater are commonly held by blacks. One respondent explained that the sea was a symbol of hope and health to many blacks.

Seawater was thought to be exceptionally pure by one youth in the sample who described it as healthy in contrast to riverwater because it did not carry infectious diseases. In this connection one might mention that another respondent was very concerned about the pollution of the sea near the African Bathing Beach which in her opinion was sited too close to the Blue Lagoon estuary.

According to another respondent, seawater cleanses spiritually and physically and bathing in the sea has a refreshing effect on body and soul. Respondents reported that seawater is used as a cure for biliousness; and field observations confirmed that a number of beachgoers collected seawater to take home with them.

Survey observations also tended to support the idea that for some beachgoers the main purpose of coming to the beach was to "take the waters". The rituals of bathing in the sea once or twice a year are apparently observed by religious groups as well as individual believers. For example, during the survey period, a group of Zionists conducted religious ceremonies on the beach and a member of the party confirmed that it was their belief that the sea had a mysterious power to cleanse the body of sin.

There are indications that a more secular version of this cleansing ritual might exist in the form of the popular excursion to the beach on New Year's Day. Many respondents reported visiting the beach during the Christmas holidays, and New Year's Day was singled out as the most popular day for a beach excursion. One young woman in the survey who stated that she regularly went to the beach on New Year's Day was under the impression that this was virtually the *only* day in the year when people visited the beach. When asked what attracted her most to the beach, she replied that she went to the beach mainly for fun and to swim, and more than anything else she went to cleanse herself of all the outgoing year's bad luck and diseases.

Although numbers were small, a significantly larger proportion of the respondents in the higher occupational ranks represented in the sample (83% of 12) than in the lower ones (30% of 13) reported disbelief in the medicinal or supernatural powers of seawater. For example, a schoolteacher and a nursing sister dismissed the exceptional value of seawater in relieving symptoms of biliousness. They asserted that warm water to which salt had been added would have a similar effect, and there was certainly nothing mysterious in this remedy. Interestingly, some of the more sophisticated respondents who tended to be sceptical of the medicinal properties of seawater, were frequently prepared to respect this belief in others. For instance, a retired nursing sister in the survey agreed that although she herself did not expect seawater to cure physical ailments - she believed it would help those who firmly believed in its usefulness. Furthermore, the survey showed that persons collecting seawater did not necessarily believe in its medicinal value; some said they regularly bottled seawater for other persons to use. In one case, a domestic worker from the Transvaal who was seeing the sea for the first time in her life, stated she had collected seawater as a souvenir to prove to her friends at home that she had been on a seaside holiday. She doubted that seawater had any curative properties, but she would be willing to distribute this water among friends who wished to use it as medicine.

5.5 Improvement of beach facilities. When questioned about their opinions of beach facilities, over two-thirds of the sample (68%) stated their dislikes and/or suggested areas of improvement. Just under one-third of the sample (32%) said they were not interested in beach facilities or did not see any need for improvements.

Although numbers were small, survey evidence suggested that persons holding higher positions in terms of occupational ranking (white collar workers and scholars and students) were more likely than other persons in the survey to see the need for improving beach facilities. More importantly, a significantly higher proportion of respondents referring to the Durban Beach (80%) than those referring to Umgababa Beach (52%) saw the need for improvements. This trend persisted even when occupational prestige factors were controlled. Among persons in the lower occupational prestige category included in the survey, 78 percent voiced grievances about the Durban Beach, but only 37 percent did so when referring to Umgababa Beach.

The types of complaints received and recommendations for remedial action differed significantly according to the beach concerned. An overview of grievances referring to the Durban and Umgababa beaches is given in Table 3.

5.5.1 Durban Beach facilities. When commenting on the Durban Beach facilities the chief complaint raised concerned the *lack* of facilities. Fewer comments on existing facilities were received, although one woman thought the African Bathing Beach required a 'facelift' because the buildings were dull.

The African Bathing Beach was generally considered to be the cinderella of the Durban Beaches reserved for the use of specific race groups. Interviewees felt their section of the beach had been neglected. Frequent referent comparisons were made to the beachfront areas reserved for whites, in particular to the amusement park.

Table 3.  
Recommended improvements to beach facilities.

Percentage respondents who urged improvement of beach facilities in the following areas:

	<u>Durban Beach</u>	<u>Umgababa Beach</u>
	%*	%*
Restaurant, kiosk facilities	36	-
Higher standard facilities	26	3
Shaded seating and rest areas, lawn	29	-
Easier access to beach	24	3
Lockers, security	21	3
Amusement park, playgrounds	19	3
Lifeguard services (larger bathing area)	9	13
Swimming pool	17	3
Privacy in changerooms	9	10
Maintenance	2	20
Service	-	17
Shopping facilities	9	3
Parking	4	-
	N = 41	N = 29

\* Multiple responses

A large percentage of the respondents felt that the standard of facilities provided on their section of the beach should match the standard of the white beaches. According to the survey respondents, the provision of restaurant facilities, an amusement park, play equipment, a swimming pool and shopping centre were needed to upgrade the African Bathing Area.

Access to the African Bathing Beach was generally considered difficult. A need was felt for the provision of additional seating and shaded areas. It was apparent that some beachgoers preferred to lie on a lawn rather than on the sand: *"There is a need to be able to rest in comfort. The beach is full of rocks and not cared for."*

It will be remembered that beach visits were associated with "cooling off". Accordingly, shade areas were a high priority for a large number of respondents. Judging from survey responses, preference for resting in the shade rather than in the sun may be prevalent among blacks. In fact only one respondent in the sample made a specific reference to sunbathing.

A significant proportion of the sample was concerned about the safety of personal belongings. One respondent confided that he had spent over an hour deciding whether he should risk leaving his belongings on the beach unguarded while he went for a swim. Respondents recommended that lockers be installed in the changerooms as this would solve the security problem on the beach. Lack of privacy in the changerooms was a problem encountered at the Durban as well as at the Umgababa Beach.

Durban bathers also felt the bathing area between the beacons became very crowded at times. It was thought that if more lifeguards were placed on duty during the height of the season the bathing area could be extended.

Some few respondents stated that the parking space provided was inadequate during the peak of the bathing season, and others called for shade trees in the parking area.

5.5.2 Umgababa Beach facilities. By contrast to the Durban Beach situation, bathers felt the Umgababa Beach resort was well-appointed. However, the service in the restaurant was poor and the maintenance of the pool and changerooms left much to be desired. The lifeguard services were also thought to be inadequate. One respondent said she associated Umgababa Beach with dirt and grime because the resort was situated right next to the railway station.

Security appeared to be less of a problem at Umgababa Beach than at the Durban Beach, possibly because the Umgababa Resort is more secluded than the African Bathing Beach. According to field observations, holidaymakers locked up their belongings in their

cottages, and the local residents who visited the beach left their valuables at home.

5.6 Attitudes toward integration of beaches. At some stage during the interview, probes were made into the respondents' attitudes towards free association between races on the Durban beaches. Respondents were first asked how they would feel about other race groups visiting beaches reserved for blacks.

Just under two-thirds of the sample held positive views of mixing, whilst approximately one-fifth had some reservations and a further fifth were opposed to the idea (cf. Table 4). The white collar workers and the scholars represented in the sample tended to respond more positively than other respondents to the idea of free association of the races on the beaches. Ninety percent of the 11 scholars, and 63 percent of the 22 white collar workers, but only 47 percent of the 36 persons in other occupational categories felt positively about mixing on the beaches.

Table 4.

Attitudes toward mixing on beaches.

	<u>%</u>
Positive	62
Apprehensive, reserved	19
Negative	19
	<u>100</u>
	N = 78

5.6.1 Preference for a specific model of beach integration.

Immediately after probing into people's feelings on mixing with other races on the beaches, respondents were told that the Durban City Council was considering opening up sections of the Durban beachfront for the use of all races.

Respondents were asked to state their preference for one of

two proposed models of integration:

- All beaches open to all race groups, OR
- Separate beaches but one big beach open to everyone.

The majority of the respondents (62%) voted for the opening of all the beaches, whilst 31 percent preferred the model in which separate beaches were retained but one open beach was accessible to all race groups (cf. Table 5). Only 6 percent voted for the status quo model, in which separate beaches are reserved for the use of one race group.

Table 5.  
Preferred solution to integrating the Durban Beach.

	<u>%</u>
All beaches open	62
Retain racially separate beaches and create one large open beach	31
Separate beaches only	6
Undecided	<u>1</u>
	100
	N = 78

Attitudes toward racial mixing on the beaches and preference of a particular model of beach integration were closely related. There was a tendency for persons who had initially supported mixing on the beaches to choose the open beach model, and for persons who had initially taken a more conservative approach toward mixing on the beaches to elect the partial integration model.

More specifically the survey results were as follows: Of 48 respondents whose initial reaction had been overwhelmingly positive, 88 percent voted for full integration, 10 percent for partial integration and 2 percent were undecided. Of 15 persons who had initially been apprehensive or sceptical with regard to mixing on beaches, 40 percent voted for full, 53 percent for partial integration, and 7

percent for separate beaches. None of the 15 persons who had initially reacted in a negative manner voted for full integration. Seventy-three percent in this group voted for the partial integration model and 27 percent preferred separate beaches.

As far as the limited data base allowed fine distinctions, preferences for the open beach model of integration tended to be more dominant in persons who might generally be characterised as less conservative or more progressive in outlook and background. For example, 81 percent of the scholars and 77 percent of the white collar workers, but only 44 percent of the persons in other occupational categories voted for fully integrated beaches in contrast to partially integrated or racially separated beaches. Seventy-two percent of the respondents who had suggested that improvements be made to the beaches, but only 41 percent of those who were satisfied with beach facilities preferred the open beach model to other options. And lastly, though numbers are small - only 36 percent voting for full integration of the beaches believed in the mystical or medicinal powers of the sea, whilst 77 percent of those voting for partial integration or racially separated beaches held this belief.

The number of visitors to Durban included in the study was small. Nevertheless, it might be pointed out that the response pattern regarding beach integration was similar among locals and visitors.

The relationship between frequency of beach visits and attitudes toward beach integration is irregular, indicating that other factors are influential. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that relatively high proportions of the persons who stated they visited the beach infrequently, say less than once a year, were conservative in their attitudes towards beach integration. On the other hand, annual beachgoers who might be expected to visit the beach on New Year's Day, were more likely than all other groups to support completely open beaches, mainly because race relations might be improved.

Table 6.

Main reasons given for preferred solution.Preference for all beaches open: N = 45

	<u>%</u>
Blacks stand to gain	38
Would improve race relations	29
Represents move in the right direction	18
Only natural for people to mix	7
Separation of beaches is unnecessary and costly	7
Blacks can learn from whites	2

Preference for retaining separate beaches and opening one large beach: N = 23

	<u>%</u>
Mixing should be voluntary	30
Danger of race tension	30
Integration of beaches is premature	17
Danger of blacks being exploited by other races	9
Mixing on beaches unacceptable on moral grounds	4
Only natural for people to mix	4
Would improve race relations	4

Preference for separate beaches: N = 4

	<u>%</u>
Integration of beaches is premature	25
Mixing on beaches is unacceptable on moral grounds	25
Mixing on beaches is unnecessary	25
Danger of blacks being exploited by other races	25

### 5.7 Motivations for supporting the integration of the beaches.

Motivations for preferring a particular type of integration model tended to be specific. An overview is given in Table 6.

5.7.1 Solution I : Fully integrated beaches. Preference for this model was chiefly based on the conviction that blacks had nothing to lose and everything to gain from full integration. The African Bathing Area had been neglected, the facilities provided were inferior, and this section of the beach was inaccessible. If the Durban beaches were opened, all these inhibiting factors would be removed. For the most part, this type of motivation was based on very practical considerations, although in some instances deeper feelings of general discrimination prevailed.

- *Allowing whites onto African beaches could improve the standard of the beaches in the sense that the Authorities would want to please whites and Africans would benefit. (Female teacher, 23 years.)*
- *Mr. D. of Umlazi, a labourer, welcomes the mixing of races at the beaches. This could result in Africans being allowed to bath in the 'whites-only' beach which is nearer to town.*
- *Africans stand to gain in all respects. There won't be (the problem of) transport to the present remote beach, there'll be more and better facilities to use. The mere existence of that beach is humiliating. (Female teacher, 30 years.)*

In short, it was usually reasoned that full integration of the Durban beaches would automatically bring about all the required improvements listed in Table 3 and generally raise the standard of beach facilities for blacks. According to one respondent, if blacks were given access to white beaches it would also be easier for them to acquire the skills in which whites were already proficient such as swimming, surfing and other water sports.

Secondly, a relatively large group of respondents felt that mixing on the beaches would promote social harmony and improve race relations. In the long run there would have to be a greater

understanding between race groups and beach integration was seen as a first step in achieving this end. Beach apartheid was considered an anomaly because mixing between races in other spheres of life was commonplace and peaceful. In this connection, a smaller number of respondents based their choice on common denominators binding the different race groups to each other, insisting that it was as natural to mix on the beaches as in other places; essentially all people were human beings.

- *This country must not pretend that we are integrated and try to encourage international sports ... only to find we are separated at the social level. (Holidaymaker from Transvaal.)*
- *There should be integration of the races at beaches. I don't see any harm in that. People are using the same facilities at Sun City. There have never been any embarrassing incidents. Instead, it brings people close together. (Female machine operator, 25 years.)*
- *There should be integration of races at all levels and as of now as a preparation for an integrated society of the post-liberation era. Since we are separated from the cradle to the grave, we shall always remain envious and suspicious of one another, whereas this could be eliminated by fostering the spirit of unity amongst races. (Male clerk, 25 years.)*

With reference to the type of reasoning outlined above some respondents specifically dismissed the partial integration model as an unnecessary and costly exercise. Opening up the beaches to all races in terms of the full integration model could be achieved at little or no extra cost to the City, whilst the partial integration model would require the development of an extra beach and an unnecessary duplication of facilities. There was also the danger that the newly developed beach might be under-utilised for various reasons and this might set back any progress made towards full integration.

- *Keeping the separate beaches and building another one is more costly and space-consuming. (Personnel officer.)*

- *There is no need for separate beaches with one for all races. This beach (the open one) might end up becoming 'African-only', because there is the possibility of it not being patronised by other races. (Saleslady, 25 years.)*
- *Separate beaches with one for everyone can never be a solution. There is a possibility of this new beach not gaining support. (Saleslady, 35 years.)*

Regarding the inconvenience caused by separate beaches, the case of a visitor from Johannesburg might be cited. This respondent was employed as a domestic worker and had been invited to join her employer's family on a seaside holiday. Whilst her employer's family went to stay at a beachfront hotel in Durban, she had been accommodated at Umgababa Beach. The respondent felt the situation was embarrassing for all concerned: *"I became a problem to my employers because of the laws of the country."*

5.7.2 Solution II : Separate beaches and one large beach open to all. The second solution to beach integration was more conservative than the foregoing. It generally appealed to those members of the sample who in principle accepted the idea of beach integration but were apprehensive about its practical implications. Some respondents were opposed to the idea of imposing a new structure of association on other people against their will. Large proportions in this response group felt mixing with other races should be voluntary and the partial integration model was consistent with this notion. It was also pointed out that only a certain class of blacks, by and large representing the more educated or 'emancipated', was accustomed to free association with other races in various domains of life. Whilst the open beach might appeal to this group, it might be a source of embarrassment to others. Using a multi-racial beach might come naturally to some beachgoers, in which case the opening of a section of the beaches to all users might improve race relations.

- *There shouldn't be restrictions as to where to swim ... There are people who like to keep to themselves or to their identity and therefore integration shouldn't be enforced on such people. However, there should be improvement on the other beaches. (Female social worker.)*

- *Blacks are not yet respectful. They would be chaotic and disturb the peaceful whites. (Labourer from Ladysmith, 25 years.)*
- *Black people are not disciplined, they always misbehave when they're among other races. (Labourer in a sugar mill.)*

Lastly, some respondents saw the implementation of the partial integration model as a preparatory stage leading to full integration at a later stage. If the second more conservative solution to integrating the beaches were introduced as a type of social experiment and it proved successful, there would be fewer risks involved in graduating to the full integration model.

Separate beaches with one for everyone:

- *Could be a starter - since there are people who still want to keep to themselves. (Trainee in Telecommunications.)*
- *Could be introduced in an initial stage before integrating the whole beach. Hostilities might come to a head. (Student nurse, 25 years.)*
- *Will do for a start, to test whether society is ready to mix on the beaches or not. (Schoolteacher, 30 years.)*
- *As a convenience for those who care to bathe together. (Motor mechanic, 40 years.)*

Other persons in this response category were afraid animosity between members of the different race groups might increase if all beaches were integrated. If unpleasant incidents of race tension were to occur, the movement to gradually remove discriminatory practices in all spheres of everyday life in South Africa would suffer a serious setback.

The impression was gained from some of the statements given by survey respondents that equal access to beaches was not a particularly high priority issue in itself and the integration of the beaches might detract attention from more important issues which needed to be resolved

in South African society. Reasoning along similar lines, other respondents pointed out that the apartheid system had not prepared the majority of South Africans for social interaction of any kind between races and it would be unwise to introduce multiracial beaches before other spheres of life had been integrated.

- *There would be disharmony and faction fighting between the races. South African society is not as yet ready for integration. The whole apartheid system should be abolished first, then we could start meeting at the basic level. For instance, mixing should begin at schools. (Clerk, 34 years, Soweto resident on holiday in Durban.)*
- *They have not gone to school together to make them used to each other. It is therefore pointless to meet socially at this stage. (Ntuzuma resident, 45 years, photographer.)*
- *We have separate lives, we have grown up in separate communities and behave differently. We should not pretend that the beach issue will alter the status quo. (Female factory worker, 28 years, Std. 10 education.)*
- *People should mix in schools before meeting each other socially. We don't even attend church services together. (Female schoolteacher.)*

A number of respondents argued that if beaches were integrated before other aspects of apartheid policy had been abolished, a multi-racial beach would be very conspicuous. The multiracial beach might attract exaggerated publicity and the image of a mixed bathing area would be defined in negative terms from the outset. Visiting a mixed beach might assume a social significance which had not been anticipated by the planners. In particular, it was feared that black women bathers might be taken advantage of by members of other race groups as had occurred elsewhere, in some of the independent homelands for instance.

Under these circumstances respondents anticipated that a mixed bathing area might be under-utilised. And if the introduction of a multiracial beach proved to be unsuccessful, they feared that further moves to break down racial barriers in other spheres of life might be delayed.

- *It would not improve the situation. I see it as a white elephant. (Male clerk, 28 years.)*
- *The beach might end up becoming African only. There is the possibility of it not being patronised by other races. (Saleslady, 25 years.)*
- *It should be built along the same lines as the one for whites to encourage both parties (black and white) to patronise this particular beach. (Holidaymaker in his thirties.)*

Furthermore, if an open bathing area were planned in a remote part of the beach the present disadvantages suffered by black beachgoers, such as inaccessibility and lack of restaurant and amusement facilities, would not be removed.

- *It might be an excuse for avoiding integrating the whole beach. This multiracial beach is certain to be placed at a very awkward place so that bathers will find it unnecessary to go to it. (Female laboratory technician.)*

5.7.3 The status-quo solution: Separate beaches. A small minority in the sample was completely satisfied with separate beaches and rejected even the compromise solution of partial integration. Motivating factors included those enumerated above: beach integration was premature and unnecessary, and blacks stood to be exploited by members of other race groups. A small minority in this group was fully committed to apartheid ideology and rejected racial mixing on the beaches on moral grounds. In this extreme case beach integration was thought to lead to an increase in racially mixed marriages which would contribute to the breakdown of the social order in South Africa.

- *I believe people should keep to themselves. There should not be any mixing of the races. Mixing might cause intermarriage. Eventually there would be more Coloureds than Africans. I don't see a need at all for Africans to go to the beach, that is a white man's pleasure. (Umlazi housewife in her thirties, the only respondent in the survey who had never been to the beach in her life).*

5.7.4 Reducing social costs: coping with race tension and other problems on integrated beaches. Whilst the majority of the respondents welcomed beach integration in one form or another, the success of such an undertaking was not considered a foregone conclusion. Even some of the more enthusiastic supporters of the full integration model voiced their misgivings regarding the implementation of integration. However, hopes of achieving success in the long run tended to make the risks involved appear less significant. Respondents urged that proper measures should be taken to ensure its success.

There was common consensus that any potential source of friction between the races should be avoided at all costs. Therefore adequate security and other precautions would have to be taken to ensure that the process of integrating the beaches was orderly.

- *Although I foresee some racial conflicts arising on the one hand, the social contact, on the other hand, would have a beneficial impact on our society. (Personnel officer.)*
- *I hope security will be tightened to ensure a peaceful social contact of the different races. (Bus driver from Estcourt, 45 years.)*
- *Security would have to be tightened as hard feelings between races might escalate into fighting. However, mixing with other races might improve the relationship between races and bring harmony in the long run. (Labourer, 17 years.)*
- *Health precautions will have to be taken to prevent infectious diseases. (Female student, 18 years.)*

Some respondents intimated that the bad elements which were presently found on the black beaches might gravitate to the open beaches and spoil the chances of beach integration working satisfactorily for all concerned. For example, petty theft might become more widespread. One might cite the case of one youngster in the sample who said he wholeheartedly supported open beaches. Pickpocketing would become a more lucrative trade for beachgoers, he noted mischievously, but denied that he was involved in this kind of activity himself.

In short, respondents supporting the two models of integration were aware of some of the problems which might be encountered in implementing the scheme. However, these problems were not thought to be insurmountable, but finding the proper solutions to them would require foresight on the part of the planners and administrators. It was essential that such problems be anticipated at the planning stage in order to ensure that the open beach experiment had every chance of success.

CHAPTER 6.SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

In late 1981 the Durban City Council considered opening up a section of the Durban beach for use by members of all race groups. At present the beach from the Point to Blue Lagoon is zoned for white use with the exception of three sections which have been designated for use by members of the Coloured, Indian and black communities, respectively. In a preliminary study conducted in October and November 1981 attitudes toward beach issues were solicited among black beachgoers and township residents. Inquiries were made into the significance of beach recreation for blacks, satisfaction with existing beach facilities, and support for open beaches. When selecting survey respondents, care was taken to include persons representing a range of age, sex, and occupational categories. Interviews were mainly conducted with beachgoers on the African Bathing Beach in Durban and on the Umgababa Beach on the south coast of Natal. A smaller number of Umlazi residents were included in the sample. In all, 78 interviews were obtained.

The majority of persons interviewed visited the beach at least once a year to swim, relax, socialise and have fun. Typically a visit to the beach with family, friends or visitors was planned during the Christmas holiday season. In this and other studies of black recreational pursuits, respondents tended to associate beach activities with the fun and games offered in the amusement park on the Durban beachfront. This close association of bathing and other types of recreation must be borne in mind when planning a multiracial beach.

Grievances concerning beach facilities were consistent with this image of the beach as a multipurpose recreational area. Major complaints received from the respondents concerned mainly the lack of facilities which were comparable in variety and quality to those provided for whites. In this connection it was thought that the integration of the beaches would give blacks access to higher standard facilities. Survey findings indicated that a number of beach facilities were non-existent or inadequate at the African Bathing Beach in Durban. These

included a restaurant, a swimming pool, an amusement park and playground, lawn and seating in the shade, and lockers in which belongings can be placed for safeguarding.

Two models of beach integration were presented to the respondents for discussion:

- Model I : Full integration - All beaches open to all race groups.  
Model II: Partial integration - Separate beaches but one big beach open to everyone.

*Sixty-two percent* of the survey respondents said they preferred *full integration of beaches*. According to this model all Durban beaches would be open to members of all races. Respondents chose this solution because they hoped it would improve the standard of beach facilities and access to the beach, improve race relations and eliminate discrimination on racial grounds.

*Thirty-one percent* of the sample favoured the *retention of separate beaches and the simultaneous creation of a large open beach*. This preference was given on the grounds that mixing on the beaches should be voluntary, the risk of race friction should be reduced as far as possible, and full integration of the beaches was premature in South Africa under present circumstances.

Only a small minority of 6 percent rejected both integration models in favour of separate beaches.

Further analysis of the survey findings revealed that persons whose social circumstances were indicative of higher educational achievement, were more likely than others to endorse an open beach policy.<sup>1)</sup> For example, the highest proportion of pro-integrationists were found in the category of students and scholars. However, age as such was not a statistically significant factor in influencing attitudes towards the integration of beaches, although a higher proportion of younger than older persons in the sample voted for a fully integrated beach.

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1) Confer also the reported 'enlightened' attitude of graduate white Durban residents toward environmental issues cited on Page 2. This and the above findings are suggestive that the educated class of Durban beachgoers - black and white, might be more supportive of open beach policy than other users.

The sample drawn in this preliminary study cannot be considered representative of black beachgoers. Nevertheless, survey findings leave little doubt that widespread acceptance of full or partial integration of the Durban beaches will be a foregone conclusion in a more comprehensive survey of black attitudes on beach policy.

At this point it should perhaps be emphasised that in this preliminary study, full integration emerged as the preferred model for improving access to the beaches for blacks. Obviously, all half measures, such as the partial integration model introduced in this study, will be fraught with problems. Certainly, the survey respondents were quick to draw attention to this fact. Readers may wish to know why the discussion of the disadvantages of the partial integration model have been reported in depth in this study. There was no intention to overemphasise the negative facets of beach integration. However, the authors felt that the participants in the survey provided many interesting and valid contributions which should be carefully considered if multiracial beaches are introduced in future.

It is also noteworthy that the partial integration model scored higher marks than the full integration model on the following two points:

- 1) The partial integration scheme can run as an experiment. (In which case the half-measure solution might be interpreted as a legitimate and purposeful approach to integrating the beaches.) And related to this,
- 2) The model does not impose a single approach to increasing bathing opportunities for blacks. (This is a particularly important aspect for some of the more conservative members of the black community.)

It is evident that the planning, promotion, and the day-to-day running of an open beach will present a formidable challenge to the City of Durban. It is therefore encouraging to learn from this survey that blacks would give the undertaking of opening up the beaches their full support if the task is handled properly. According to survey response, full support is generally conditional upon the following points:

- 1) The open beach must represent a real improvement over the existing situation regarding recreation opportunities for black beach users. (As mentioned above, beach recreation is frequently viewed by blacks as a combination of bathing and beachfront amusement activities.)
- 2) In particular, the open beach must be easily accessible for black users. In other words, the siting of the open beach is all-important.

Apart from practical considerations, it is very probable that a particular social meaning will be attached to the chosen site. For example, the choice of a central, highly visible site is likely to be interpreted as a genuine effort to provide equal beach recreation opportunities, whilst the proposition of a remote site might signify that mere furtive efforts are being made to improve recreation opportunities for blacks. Decision-makers will be wise to bear such distinctions in mind. According to survey response, the ideal site for an open beach might be somewhere in the vicinity of the Battery Beach and amusement park area (cf. Figure 2 ).

As we have seen, consultation with users will be essential in order to enlist general support for an open beach. The success of Durban's beach policy will be dependent on the whole-hearted support of all beach users - black as well as white. Regarding the finer planning details pertaining to opening sections of the Durban beach, it will of course be necessary to consult with a wider section of black users than could be reached in this preliminary study. And it goes without saying that the white, Indian and Coloured users will have to be drawn into the discussion as well. This represents a further research task to be undertaken in future.

And finally, no matter what the outcome of the deliberations on the beach issue, one thing is certain, this and other survey evidence made it abundantly clear that expectations among blacks have been raised. Blacks anticipate that they will in future be able to participate more fully in beach recreation. These hopes will be shattered unless the appropriate means of accommodating their demands is found. Only when the black residents and holidaymakers are afforded ample opportunities for enjoying beach recreation will Durban live up to its image as a holiday centre.

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