

https://dspace.org/

Interracial contact: an exploration of the lack of contact between black and white students

Conradie, Eutricia Eugene Euzee

2011-10-11
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/10528

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

group simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group" (Allport, 1954, p.7). Finchilescu et al (2007) differentiated between two forms of prejudice in their study, namely "traditional prejudice" and "modern prejudice". Traditional prejudice was expressed as a derogation of the out-group with members of the in-groups trusting their own superiority. It was sometimes also referred to as "blatant" or "old-fashioned" prejudice. For example, a person who scored high on a measure of traditional prejudice was considered not likely to care about the feelings or perceptions of the out-group. However, in modern prejudice, which was considered to be more aversive and subtle, the person who scored high on this measure of prejudice was considered to be more likely to endorse negative stereotypes. Aversive prejudice "reflected ambivalence between the affective and cognitive responses of the individual to members of an out-group" (Finchilescu, 2005, p.468). Regardless of what form of prejudice an individual expressed, there was a tendency to avoid contact. Furthermore, if the out-group was perceived as a threat to the in-group's well-being or resources ("realistic threats"), or seen as violating the cultural beliefs of the in-group in some way ("symbolic threats") it had a strong effect on inter-group attitudes (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001).

Many people seemed prejudiced but only a small percentage of individuals actually acted on their prejudice (Pettigrew, 1981). This prejudice ranged from mild and covert to harsh and overt, and was presented on a continuum from least to most energetic (Allport, 1979). The author presented a five-level model of "acting out prejudice", namely "antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. Antilocution was seen as the mildest form of prejudice, characterized by prejudicial talk among like-minded people and occasionally a stranger (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993). It was usually a very controlled expression of hostility that was limited to small circles such as a small group of whites who expressed a dislike and fear that their residential suburb was becoming too integrated, and that their property value would decrease as a result. Other factors contributing to prejudice were the observation and internalization of attitudes in the community, the influence of peers, the desire to be part of the in-group, a

preference to stick to people belonging to one's own racial group and social contact (Byrnes, 1988). Increased social contact with members of other racial groups was seen to contribute to the acceptance of differences and improved attitudes toward those groups. One of the important conditions for the reduction of prejudice or interracial conflict was that contact should be of an intimate nature (Amir, 1969). While there were criteria in terms of the recommended type of contact that should take place, the underlying message was that inter-group contact reduced prejudice.

Grant (1995) argued that the contact hypothesis assumed that all students readily accepted the norms and characteristics of the white culture and that approaches focused on contact between individual members of different groups and failed in addressing the roles of school culture and curriculum in the promotion of interracial contact. This was perceived as discrimination which was the phase during which the individual takes active steps to exclude members of another group from his group. During the apartheid years in South Africa, discriminating practices led to segregation in many areas of peoples life's such as education. Current practices of discrimination were employment opportunities that were based on affirmative action efforts such as hiring only black employees. It was very easy for an individual to move from the discrimination phase of prejudice to physical confrontation, especially under emotionally laden conditions (Ponterotto, Lewis & Bullington, 1990). Many racial confrontations, on high school grounds, universities, and the broader society were reported upon in newspapers and television. Extermination was the final phase which involved the systematic and planned destruction of a group of people based on their group membership such as the Hitler genocide which seemed to be the ultimate expression of prejudice, ultimately leading to total avoidance of contact with the out-group (Allport, 1979). Regardless of what form or type of prejudice was present, it was clear that prejudice effected the contact interaction between members of different racial groups.

For example, Vorauer and Kumhyr (2001) explored contact between either two white Canadian students or a white and Aboriginal Canadian student. Their results indicated

that the level of prejudice had an effect on contact, and that white students tended towards anticipation of negative evaluations from their minority interaction partners. However, Shelton (2003) argued that such evaluations were sometimes "unwarranted". Furthermore, research indicated that white people who were concerned about appearing prejudiced were often self-conscious and self-critical (Devine, Evett & Vasquez-Suson, 1996; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). Additionally, inter-group behaviour was considered to be inherent to the personal or the social categories that the individual has switched, resulting in the need to differentiate the in-group from comparable out-groups, which in turn led to in-group favoritism and out-group hostility (Turner & Onorato, 1999). As prejudice is often accompanied by stereotypes, a discussion on the latter follows.

2.6 STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are defined as an over-generalized belief about a group of people, such as "Whites are rich". They are either negative, positive, or neutral statements about members of social category groups like race. More generally, stereotypes are seen as oversimplified, prejudiced preconceptions of the characteristics that differentiate persons, situations, or social groups. Lee (1989) defined stereotypes as a favourable or unfavourable belief about an individual, derived from rigid attributions made on the basis of perceived group membership. She noted that human beings "create stability and meaning by grouping objects of perception using various classificatory schemes" (p.12). With stereotyping, general psychological characteristics are attributed to people comprising the out-group, which tend toward simplification and usually constitute a pre-judgement (Wilhelm, 1994).

Lack of contact also results in groups having stereotypical ideas of each other (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). However, if there was actual contact and if the communication was of inadequate quality and depth, it did not disconfirm existing stereotypes of the out-group (Rose, 1992 as cited in Buttny, 1999). This suggests that the quality of the information

must be interpersonal rather than inter-group, allowing the individuals to become acquainted as individuals rather than on a social or cultural level (Gudykunst, 1995). Buttny (1999) argued that groups that had little history of "face-to-face" contact would be more likely to misread each other's cultural communication style or paralingual markers such as speech rate and volume. This would result in "difficult dialogues" and failures in communicating and reinforce existing stereotypes. In addition the levels of communication satisfaction decreased (Martin, Hecht & Larkey, 1994). The authors asserted that "avoidance" was the most frequently used strategy among white people and black people. For Hamilton (1979) a number of encoding and memory biases operated to make existing stereotypes and beliefs difficult to disconfirm. According to him information about a group member that was irrelevant to existing stereotypes failed to be noticed. However, information that was highly inconsistent with stereotypic expectations was more likely to be salient and well remembered but may not lead to any changes in the group stereotype (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981). Stallybrass (1977) proposed that stereotypes were commonly accompanied by prejudice and used by individuals as an aid in the cognitive structuring of his or her social environment as well as for the protection of their value system.

To theorists within the cultural approach, societal consensus was paramount. They argued that stereotypes only had meaning to the extent they were culturally shaped (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Forgas, 1981). However, a full understanding of stereotypes demands some simultaneous adoption of both individual and collective perspectives of stereotypes. The individual approach emphasizes the beginnings of stereotypes and focuses on the individual cognitive motivational processes that account for the fact that stereotypes have to start somewhere (Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind & Rosselli, 1996). According to these authors, once stereotypes start in a culture, it takes on a life of its own, influencing social behaviour in ways beyond that of the actions of any individual.

Regarding the collective approach to stereotypes, it emphasizes the duplication of stereotypes, attends to the content of stereotypic beliefs and focuses on the means through

which stereotypes are transmitted and maintained. Stangor (2000) found that this approach offers limited insight into the underlying, individual stereotyping processes through which stereotypes apply their effects. The author reported that the individual approach to stereotype representation focuses more directly on the processes of stereotype development and change. The most traditional approach to stereotyping within the individual approach is based on the cognitive schemata which are abstract knowledge structures that specify the defining features and relevant attributes of a given concept (Fiske & Linville, 1980). They give meaning to social information and promote effective information processing. These group schemas are seen as collections of beliefs about the characteristics of a social group because they represent social groups, and they influence an individual's perceptions, attention, interpretation, and judgment as well as behaviour towards others (Stangor, 2000). Schemas also provide an underlying mechanism to account for stereotype use and maintenance of racial segregation.

Studies have demonstrated how stereotypes affected peoples' perceptions of members of other racial groups, as well as their memory for events. For example Allport and Postman (1947) showed a picture of well-dressed black male on a train talking to a white man who was holding a razor blade. The participant had to describe the picture to another participant, who was then asked to describe it to another and so forth. Because the rest of the participants had not seen the picture, the aim of the exercise was to determine whether the picture would be distorted in line with the societal stereotypes. The authors found that the story was changed in the stereotypical way that depicted the black man as being aggressive, as he ended up holding the razor. This study showed that stereotypes can affect people's memory in a way that distorts reality. These false beliefs maintain the segregation of races, and make people reluctant to interact with out-group members. However, Hinton (2000) asserted that a stereotype had three important components. According to the author there was a group of people who were identified by a specific characteristic such as race or ethnicity. By identifying the group on this characteristic people were able to distinguish them from other groups. After this, a set of additional characteristics was attributed to the group as a whole. An individual who thus identified

one person as having these characteristics attributed the stereotypical characteristic to that individual. In defining what the in-group was, the participant had to also define for himself what it was not, suggesting that in that sense in-groups required out-groups (Brewer & Miller, 1996).

Shelton and Richeson (2005) argued that similar to white people; black people were worried about how they would be treated in inter-group interactions because of this group membership. Some black people were concerned that they would be perceived in terms of negative stereotypes associated with their racial group and that they would be discriminated against because of their group (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Pinel, 1999 as cited in Shelton and Richeson, 2005). This concern seemingly affected black peoples' attitudes and behaviours during interracial interactions (Shelton, 2003). For example, black students who were sensitive to rejection based on their race had fewer white friends at the end of their first year at university, compared to black students who were less concerned about possible rejection based on their racial membership (Shelton and Richeson, 2005). This suggests that black students who expect contact with white students to be negative limit the amount of interracial experiences that they have. However, when the interracial contact was unavoidable, black students seemingly made use of "compensatory strategies" to ward off any negative outcomes during the interaction (Shelton, 2003; Shelton & Richeson, 2003). White students were also often considered to be concerned about the impression that they made on members of the out-group with regards to prejudice (Vorauer et al., 1998, 2000). White students also anticipated that members of the out-group would perceive them as being "cold" and "prejudiced", and as a result behave negatively towards them. Similarly, Shelton and Richeson (2005) indicated that white students explained their lack of mixing with members of other racial groups to their fear of being rejected because of their race. In post-apartheid South Africa, the South African history made it "particularly difficult for the racial barriers to be broken down" (Finchilescu et al., 2007, p.464). According to the authors, the distorted or lack of knowledge and expectations developed during apartheid, were likely to have been

perpetuated through the socialization process, hence contributing to the continuous negative stereotypes which acted as barriers to contact between the racial groups. Once group stereotypes exist in a particular culture or racial group, expected behaviour patterns for those group members follow. These expectations then determine both the responses to out-group members as well as the behaviour of the group members themselves. When members of different groups willingly or unwillingly act in stereotypical ways, their behaviour both justifies and perpetuates the stereotype. Even when a specific group member acts in ways inconsistent with the existing norms, he or she is constrained by the expectations of others through behavioural confirmation (Jussim & Flemming, 1996). This stereotyping and lack of inter-racial mixing is reflected at universities where an environment exists that is most conducive to the breakdown of racial barriers.

The current chapter thus provided an overview of the existing literature on inter-racial contact by exploring the various factors which acted as obstacles to inter-racial mixing and provides a foundation for the research that is to follow. Furthermore, the chapter introduced the reader to the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954) highlighting the fact that racial segregation persists in spite of the presence of optimal conditions for contact and the reduction of prejudice as specified by the hypothesis. The next chapter focuses on the methodology that will be used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study uses a qualitative research approach as a mode of inquiry, using focus group discussions for data collection, and thematic content analysis as a tool for data analysis.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

3.2.1 Sampling

The sample for this research study comprised of 24 male and 29 female participants (8 focus groups, with a male and female group per race (white, coloured, black, indian) drawn from a population of students at the University of the Witwatersrand. This population of students was purposefully sampled because they showed an interest in the topic, and wanted to partake in the focus group discussions.

Stratified by race and gender, the participants consisted of 8 black males, eight black females; five coloured males, six coloured females; five indian males, seven indian females; six white males and eight white females. They were kept in their respective gender and racial groups to ensure homogeneity which is a key principle in forming focus groups (Kingry, Tiedje & Friedman, 1990). The use of homogenous groups over mixed groups was particularly useful in promoting familiarity with the way the participants normally talked, allowing them to use the particular terminology and vocabulary they typically used as a group. Despite the fact that mixed groups could allow for a greater variability of responses, social groups were more comfortable in the safe and familiar context of their own turf, and interacting in group interactions with others they already knew (Krueger & King, 1998). Furthermore, the use of homogenous groups also empowered disadvantaged groups by validating and publicizing their views (Mishler, 1986).

The participants were selected on a volunteer basis and included anyone who showed an interest in the topic, provided they belonged to one of the racial groups mentioned above, and were enrolled as students at the University of the Witwatersrand. In addition, a snowball pattern was utilized, which involved the researcher requesting the initially selected participants for recommendations of any other person whom they felt would be interested in forming part of the discussions. The recommended persons were then invited to form part of the focus groups. Some of the participants were thus familiar with each other as friends before the study. This improved the quality of the data collected as the solidarity among friends seemed to decrease any discomfort with the topic and allowed participants to talk freely about their experiences (Kissling, 1996). The sample had a relatively high education level since the participants were undergraduate and postgraduate university students of diverse ages, across all the various faculties at the University of the Witwatersrand.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

3.3.1 Focus Groups

Interracial contact comprises a sensitive range of differences in personal experiences, cultural and racial backgrounds. Focus groups rather than personal interviews were chosen for this study because they were more naturalistic than personal interviews ("closer to everyday conversation use") and included a range of communicative processes such as disagreement and storytelling (Silverman, 1997, p. 180). One advantage of focus groups over personal interviews was that they provided a way of collecting data relatively quickly from a large number or research participants. According to Silverman (1997) there was a common misconception that people would be reticent about revealing intimate details in the context of group discussions. However, research has shown that focus groups are well-suited to exploring sensitive topics and that the group context facilitates personal disclosures (Farquhar & Das, 1999; Frith, 2000). The use of focus groups allowed the participants to react to and build upon the responses of other group

members, leading to the production of more elaborated accounts than those generated in personal interviews (Silverman, 1997). Focus group discussions also resulted in more unexpected insights, many of which were unlikely to have arisen in the context of individual interviews.

Focus groups usually include six to ten participants to allow everyone participation in the discussions while still eliciting a range of responses (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). It is important to strike a balance between having enough participants for creating a discussion, and not having so many people that some of the participants feel crowded out. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) a smaller sample would help in facilitating greater attention to the texture of the discussions when one explored thematic meaning. Focus groups are also useful in understanding perceptions about inter-racial interactions, and enabled the author of the current research in understanding the variety of the participants' experiences, furthermore giving her the opportunity to directly observe spontaneous group interaction (Kiguwa, 2001). Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on generating findings that can be generalized, the information from focus groups is primarily concerned with highlighting the meanings and interpretations that the participants place on experiences in their own terms.

3.3.2 Procedure

The study explored the lack of contact between black and white students. The participants were chosen for participation in the focus groups largely because they showed interest in the topic of discussion. Eight focus group discussions were conducted that included 4-8 participants in each group. All the participants were kept in their various racial groups and gender in keeping with the principle of maintaining within-group homogeneity which served to encourage honesty and facilitated interaction in a non threatening environment (Morgan, 1997). Each focus group had a facilitator of the same racial group. The facilitators were all post-graduate students at the University of the Witwatersrand and were selected using snowball sampling. For example, the black

focus groups had a black male facilitator, the white groups had a white male facilitator; the indian groups had a female indian facilitator. The author facilitated the discussions for the coloured groups. The author purposefully selected post-graduate students who were interested in the topic, had facilitated focus groups before, and were interested in partaking in the study as a facilitator. The author then asked the selected individuals for referrals and recommendations of similar individuals. All the facilitators had various levels of skills in qualitative research and interviewing; however the author was not certain whether they received formal training in focus group facilitation. They were hence all briefed in a 30 minute meeting on the topic, the purpose of the focus groups and focus group facilitation; however they , and were left alone to conduct their respective groups. All the focus groups were conducted in English and lasted for approximately one hour. The use of different facilitators is considered a strength as this approach facilitated greater disclosure among the participants.

A comfortable and non-threatening venue, the Postgraduate Conference Room at Wits University was arranged for the participants to meet. The location was convenient for the researcher and the participants who were informed of the venue in advance. Refreshments were provided to all the participants, since eating together promotes conversation and communication within the group (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). The purpose of the meeting was explained to all the participants. This was a critical first step as the researcher wanted to eliminate any assumptions about the nature of the study. The participants were assured of confidentiality and were requested permission for the discussions to be audio recorded on audiocassettes using a tape recorder. Informed consent was also received from all the participants. The groups were requested to focus on the lack of contact between whites and blacks by exploring whether they thought there was mixing on campus; whether it was a good idea for the different racial groups to mix socially and whether there were obstacles to mixing; whether there were opportunities for contact; whether they thought people in South Africa mixed freely and if not, whether they thought there would ever come a time when people mixed freely. (Refer to appendix "C" for the interview guide).

It was important to make all the participants feel that their contributions were valued and that they could express themselves without fear of judgment or criticism from others. The facilitators kept the discussion flowing for approximately one hour; ensuring that some participants did not dominate the conversations, allowing everyone an equal opportunity to express themselves. At the end of the discussion the researcher summarized the main perceptions, points of view briefly, and thanked the participants for their participation. After the group discussions, the audiocassettes were reviewed for the diverse impressions that surfaced during the discussions, transcribed and submitted to thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). For the present study, the author transcribed some of the tapes; however a qualified transcriber was utilized to transcribe most of the tapes. All the transcripts were checked again to ensure that the cassettes were accurately transcribed and these focus group transcripts became the source of date.

3.3.3 Ethics

This protocol (protocol number: MACC/08/011 IH) for this study was reviewed and approved by the Internal Human Research Ethics Committee (School of Human and Community Development) of the University of the Witwatersrand. The participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the research and were verbally informed and assured of confidentiality prior to the commencement of the focus group discussions. A consent form (Appendix A) was signed by each participant for consent which emphasized the voluntary nature of participation in the research, as well as confidentiality and anonymity. Another form included consent for audio-taping of the focus group discussions (Appendix B) and included the protection of anonymity. In addition, the researcher verbally assured the participants that the tapes would be destroyed after they have been transcribed.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of the analysis was to look for trends and patterns that reappeared within a single focus group or within various focus groups. Analysis was systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous and was a process of comparison (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). According to these authors, focus group analysis combined many different elements of qualitative research, and in addition added the complexity of group interaction. The author thus consider the words, the comments, specificity of the comments as well as what was not said during the discussions.

The analysis of the data was informed by thematic content analysis which involved restructuring the transcriptions in order to make sense of the data (Mostyn, 1985). It is a coherent way of organizing focus group material under thematic headings in relation to specific research questions (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tidal, 1994). This is done in a way that does justice to the research questions and the concerns of the participants. Thematic content analysis starts with the identification of research questions after which a sample is chosen, from which the text is drawn. The responses from the various participants is compared and condensed into recurrent themes (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). According to Morgan (1997) analysis must not only focus on the participants, but also on the dynamics of the group as a whole. Once the text is transcribed, it is broken down for phrases or sentences which can be regarded as descriptive of the research question (Kiguwa, 2001). According to Krippendorf (1980) the concepts of sampling, recording and content play an important role when doing thematic analysis as they are all interlinked, concurrent processes which entail a specific focus on the focus group transcripts which often contain categories of expressions. The focus is on any thematic units that emerge, however, it is necessary to set limits on the amount of contextual information that is utilized for analysis when describing themes or categories identified.

Eagle (1998) suggested that both a deductive and inductive approach to analysis can be adopted in thematic content analysis. Inductive analysis focuses on using a pre-existing theoretical framework to inform the analysis of the themes, whereas deductive analysis focuses on the discovery of theory that emerges from the text and not from an already identified theoretical framework. Themes, as conceptualized within the literature have formed the reading of themes in the present study, as the researcher identified thematic categories based on already existent theories in interracial contact as well as contributing to the literature by producing new categories.

The analytic process began with a focusing on the transcripts collected from the sample whereby specific answers to questions as well as sentences made during the focus group discussions were selected for analysis (Krippendorf, 1980). An attempt was made by the author to engage with the data with an open mind. The author checked the transcripts for their accuracy and the categories or themes that were emerging were noted. The author utilized the more practical approach suggested by Mostyn (1985) to gain insight into the meaning of the data. The raw material was scrutinized for regularities in the themes or concepts which could be brought together in a way that made sense of the data. In line with this approach, the author started the analysis by immersing herself in the data. This was done by reading the data over and over again, categorizing it by selecting categories or themes with which to organize the analysis, and setting the data aside for a period of time to think about the various ideas and themes. After this, the author explored the data for new relationships and patterns, and interpreted the data in order to make sense and meaningful perspectives from the data (Lewis, 2002). The author also invited her postgraduate research tutor and some of her postgraduate peers to read and comment on the data at various stages of the research, a process which assisted the author in illuminating blind spots. This ensured the reliability of the identification and interpretation of the themes (Kiguwa, 2001).

3.4.1 Codes and Categories

All the relevant data was grouped together under categories which were examined for patterns and common themes. The author repeatedly read the transcripts to understand the data. This process enabled the author to create categories which involved extracting those details and features which were most salient to the purpose of this study. The author built up a set of categories which was used as a reference to more quotes in the data (Lewis, 2002).

Using a table format, the author collected and categorized all the relevant quotes pertaining to the various categories. All the relevant data was grouped together under three major categories. The essential stage of analysis involved the interpretation of the data and getting a feeling for what the participants were really saying. The analysis involved drawing together and comparing discussions of similar themes, and examining how these related to the variation between the participants and between the groups. The transcribed texts were then analyzed in an attempt to understand which themes were dominating. These themes were explored to develop a fuller understanding of the reasons why black and white students did not mix socially. The major themes identified in this stud are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained the research design and methodology used in the study. The central aim of this study was to explore the lack of contact between black and white university students. Presented below in this chapter is a discussion of the research findings. Focus group discussions in this study played a major role, as most of the information provided by the participants was important in identifying the barriers to interracial mixing as perceived by the black and white participants in this study. A number of themes emerged from the focus group discussions. "Theme" is taken broadly here as a "recurring topic" that the participants discussed (Buttny, 1997). The various themes that were identified from the focus group discussions were grouped under the headings, "minimum contact", "medium contact" and "maximum contact" as distinguished by Triandis and Vassiliou (1966). The chapter closes with a discussion of the research limitations and recommendations for future research.

4.2 MINIMUM CONTACT

4.2.1 Prejudice

One of the reasons that participants accounted to the lack of mixing between black and white students was prejudice. According to Ponterotto & Pedersen (1993) prejudice resulted from an interaction of three factors namely, people's tendency towards ethnocentrism, their lack of significant inter-group contact, and their inclination to organize information into pre-developed categories. Ponterotto & Pedersen (1993) highlighted that prejudice could be directed at any number of groups and could be either ethnic based (ethnocentrism) or race based (racism). Prejudice can take many forms and expressions, from the "mild and covert" to the "harsh and overt"; however, only a small

percentage of individuals acted on their prejudice as demonstrated by Pettigrew (1981). Antilocuton, the mildest form of prejudice, was experienced by one participant experienced when he moved into a certain neighborhood with his parents and siblings a few years back. When they first moved in, the neighbors just watched from their windows, and did not come to welcome them or talk to them. So started a ritual of peeping, and he would often find somebody from their neighbors house watching their coming and goings. When a "street watch" was formed, and everybody invited to join except for their house, the family ignored it and moved on with their lives:

> **"It felt really weird, you know, people staring at you, you just know they are there, you can feel them, but you can't see them, and you feel like you are some criminal because everybody is avoiding your house, and doesn't include your family in things. I am glad we moved out of there."** (BM1)

For this participant, mixing with his white neighbors seemed difficult as he felt like the outsider, even believing that he was a criminal. He did not seem to have real evidence that people were staring at them everyday, but the belief that they did was enough for them to move to a different suburb. According to Allport (1979), individual beliefs could be changed when there was enough factual evidence. He emphasized that the underlying attitude was much harder to change, especially because such an individual could produce another erroneous belief for each one that was replaced by factual evidence. A great deal of work has been done in some countries to reduce prejudice. For example, prejudice reduction programmes were implemented in America in the 1960's to expose the racially dominant group to other cultures (Simpson & Yinger, 1985). In doing so, they hoped that exposure to the heterogeneity of the subordinate group would help to break down prejudice and negative stereotypes. What they found, however, showed that contact between the different racial groups was not sufficient to reduce prejudice, at times leading to an increase in prejudice in the dominant groups.

4.2.2 Race

In South Africa, race seemed to be a category which people used in creating their prejudicial views of one another. It was one of the reasons reported by both white and black students for the lack of interracial mixing and seemed to play an important role in how students perceived interracial contact. Race appeared to have a definite impact on how black and white students interacted with others, how each group perceived out-group members, and also on the resulting attitudes. This ultimately impacted upon whether or not they would have interracial contact or even form friendships with out-group members. There were many stereotypical views that were expressed based on race and both the black and the white participants voiced almost similar accounts, reflecting the multiple discourses on race.

As some of the participants stated:

> **"Race influences my decisions and choices. I absolutely see race first before I see the person, it's probably wrong to do this, but whatever. We live in a society where everything is based on race, and as a result you are judged."** (BF1)

> **"There is such a fuss about race...I guess you can't run away from it, because unfortunately that is the measure that is used against you. People see race first, then the person. Race is used in this country to define people, it's just a fact, and it is used against both Whites and Blacks. It impacts on everything, and people either embrace it or reject it. ..."** (WF1)

The participants expressed similar sentiments, namely, that race was used to determine who they were, and how they were perceived as a result. Race seemed to also influence how they related to one another, as well as the choices and decisions that they made.

Similarly, Goldberg (1998) that argued that race defined peoples' daily experiences such as how they were seen and treated, what they could do and even where they could go. Some of the participants seemed upset when they discussed how race determined everything in their lives, such as where they could live. Since the Abolition of the Racially Based Land Measures Act was passed in 1991, people from various racial groups were able to choose their residential areas without any legal restrictions. South African towns and cities were subsequently characterized by rapid urbanization (Christopher, 2001). This has allowed members of different racial groups various opportunities to mix with each other as black and white people moved to previously segregated suburbs. On the surface it looked like the racial groups were integrating and living together, however it seemed like there was no mixing within the desegregated areas. This was felt by the participants as they observed this in the areas where they lived, worked and studied.

While desegregation seemed to be a new experience for some of the black students who were now able to afford lifestyles previously impossible, it was not received positively by white people. For some of the white participants in this study, having members of other racial groups move into their neighborhoods seemed a negative experience. They experienced it with a degree of frustration and anger, as they found it hard to adjust to their newly integrated suburbs. For one white female participant, mixing with members of other racial groups in her previously white suburb seemed a negative experience. She experienced the racial groups as racially segregated the same way they were during the apartheid era, and seemed upset that black people were moving into her suburb:

> **"Just look at the greater society, I mean, people are not really living together...it seems like it, but when you drive around its obvious that most suburbs are still dominated by the same racial groups that were there during Apartheid. My suburb is still mostly whites, and show me if there are any Whites who are moving into Soweto and Alexandra for example, it is still pretty segregated...I think we only**

> **interact here at the University, and also not that much. I also do not think it is fair that we must pay for what happened in the past. You don't see us flocking to live in black suburbs."** (WF2)

It appeared as if the above participant wanted the racial groups to remain segregated and she motivated this by stating that white people were not moving into black suburbs. She felt that it was unfair that young white people had to pay for what happened during apartheid as she was not even born then, nor took part in anything that happened then. This feeling seemed to reflect what some of the white students in this study alluded to, namely that black students seemed obsessed with race and apartheid, lived in the past and blamed everything that was negative in their lives on apartheid. As a result, the white students seemed reluctant to mix with black students and avoided contact whenever possible. As this participant responded:

> **"It is unfair, because the Blacks are now getting everything because of oppression etc...I mean, I am not responsible for what happened during apartheid, but just because I am white, I must be treated like I took everything away from them. How would they feel if all the Whites went to live in their suburbs, not that I would want to, but one does not feel safe anymore. Just in my neighborhood there are now so many Indians moving in, it is turning into an Indian suburb...so the whites group together, it is just natural to do so, it is either that, or you sell your house and move to another white suburb, that is if you can find one."** (WF3)

The above female displayed strong feelings about desegregation. On the one hand she reported her frustration about being unable to stop the Indians from moving into her suburb, resulting in her feeling unsafe. On the other hand she seemed upset that black people were blaming everything on apartheid and seemingly getting beneficial treatment as a result. She motivated this by stating that she was not responsible for what happened

to the black people during apartheid, perceiving it as "unfair" and that whites were not flocking to live in black neighborhoods. The participant's reported situation appeared to be a dilemma in that she reported being unable to stop the influx of indian people into her neighborhood, and felt helpless as well as unable in moving to another white suburb (Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley, 1988). This resulted in her avoiding contact with the indian people in her neighborhood, preferring to mix with members of her group.

As Amir (1976) reported, casual contact had little or no effect on people's basic attitude changes. Instead, the negative attitudes of some of the white students were now being reinforced because of the interaction that they had with members of the out-group. This only seemed to reduce the actual contact between the groups. However, contrary to the white participants in this study, Hamilton and Bishop (1976) found that the white participants in their study reported reduced prejudice towards black people when a black family arrived to live in their previously racially homogeneous suburb. This effect occurred even when the participants reported not having had any direct contact with the black family. Furthermore, Wright et al (1997) found that participants who knew at least one member of their in-group with an out group friend, reported weaker out-group prejudice than those without indirect friends. However, the external realities of residential segregation, and numerous inter group inequalities make the mixing very superficial (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). It seemed obvious that prejudice was still alive and that some white people were not willing to mix at all. As this participant responded:

> **"....Two or three years ago there were more whites living in my building, but they have all gone...there are a few left, so it makes you wonder. You are black and you come to live in a building just to find its mostly white...and then you find you are one of a few blacks, and when you look again, you are only blacks left...now what does that tell you. The old South Africa lives on in these people; they will rather die than live with blacks..."** (BM2)

4.2.3 Economic Status

One other reason that was underlying this tendency to avoid contact seemed to be economic status. Some of the black participants could not afford to move into a white or indian neighborhood even when they wanted to. This only served to highlight the poverty amongst the groups, keeping the poor where they were, with only those who were economically able, moving to better areas. Wealth continued to be distributed unequally and economic inequality seemed to be expressed racially as apparent from the discussions below:

> **"...and then there's the status thing, whites can afford to move, so when they see black people moving into their places, they move, to a better, more expensive area where they know blacks wont afford...so they still have the bucks...only a few blacks can keep up with this, buying expensive houses, it's a status thing, the more money they make the bigger the house and the car to keep up with their white neighbors, it's insane"** (BM2)

> **Well, if you are black and you have money, then you are somehow not perceived as being black because these blacks live in mansions in white suburbs, and they even sound white when they speak. I would not go into a white area and go live there, even if I had the money, because discrimination is still there. You can live there, but do you see these Blacks and Whites interacting? Everybody stays in their little mansion, and each has electric wiring that can kill a whole city and they pretend to be civil. People still live with whom they feel comfortable with, and that is amongst their own people.** (BF2)

> **"I think Indians are treated better than blacks or coloureds; they also seem to have a lot of money and live in big houses. They are pretty**

> **exclusive, you know they stick to their kind and go to their prayers and stuff...it's like they live in their own world. I don't see Indians living in black neighborhoods; it's always the blacks that struggle. I don't know about the coloureds, they also have it bad because they don't fit in anywhere, and they're also seen as being negative, you know, the gangsters all are Coloured. The Whites just seem to be luckier than most."** (BF3)

The legal barriers of segregation were taken down, but racial integration seemed slow to take hold in the thinking of the general population. Some of the participants experienced this desegregation between the rich and the poor as another form of discrimination. As was seen in the discussions above, some of the black female participants seemed to perceive the status between the groups as unequal, perceiving themselves to be in a worse position. According to Lowe (1987) this led to mistrust and suspicion between the groups. The participants perceived having money as a beneficial tool to get out of poverty and gain status. For example, the above black participants experienced the indian and the white participants as being in a better financial position than they were. The indian people were seen as being better treated than black people because they had more money and lived in "big houses" just like the whites did. The one black female felt that black people with money were somehow not seen as "black" anymore, and gained status and power because of their financial status. She felt that such black people still did not have contact with their white neighbors, even though they moved into big houses in white neighborhoods. It seemed as if these participants were generalizing about the other racial groups because they might not have had sufficient information on a personal level. However, the participants highlighted that economic status played a role in the apparent racial segregation in desegregated suburbs. This suggests that economic disparities in South African societies are still racially defined. Many of the black participants are still living in townships which give them little chance for socializing with white people. It also seems that only those black people who are financially able, move into desegregated white neighborhoods, suggesting that this mobility is linked to economic success.

4.2.4 Stereotypes

People generalized and frequently made stereotypical remarks of members of members of other racial groups in the absence of adequate knowledge of how those people really were, as was shown by the stereotypical remarks made by the participants in this study. Despite the potentially positive effects that interracial contact had on those who were involved, it was unrealistic to expect that it would have a uniform effect on everyone (Mynhardt & du Toit, 1991). Whether someone had previous contact with other racial groups did however impact on the way the person responded. For example, those participants, both black and white who had less interracial contact were more prejudiced and stereotypical in their descriptions of the other race groups, whereas those who had more inter-racial contact had more positive things to say about one another. This supported the argument by Mynhard and du Toit (1991) who argued that people who had less previous contact with a particular group could be expected to be more influenced by a later contact situation. Furthermore, it seemed that the black and white participants in the present study had different levels of exposure to one another and continued their racial clustering despite the opportunities for interaction that existed at the University.

Some of the white participants felt that black people expected preferential treatment or services as a result of what happened in South Africa during the apartheid years. For example, this white female participant seemed upset that black people acted like victims, and she experienced them as discriminating against her generation of white people:

> **"Blacks are racists. They are all crying, ooh, it's the Whites who are racists etc but who are they kidding? They all think that they should get preferential treatment now for what happened in the past. Sometimes this without even having an education, they want the best jobs and so forth. We work hard for everything we have, they expect to be handed things on a platter, just coz they were oppressed during apartheid. Not all the whites rejoiced during apartheid, there were**

> **some whites who actually cared about the human being and didn't like what was happening. What they forget is that we are all part of the same generation; we are not responsible for the actions of our parents. We are all affected by what happened; I just get angry when the focus is on them and their needs. What about our needs? Maybe it's not as bad I don't know, but this is how I experience it, maybe you get some blacks that are not racists and stuck in all this oppression crap...I am generalizing, but that is exactly what they are doing. I 8don't understand this, you know, how do they think, its like we are two different species."** (WF4)

The above white participant expressed and seemed to uphold her group stereotype of black people being "racists". She acknowledged that she may be generalizing, implying that she was trying to rationalize this. This construction of black people as racists and expecting better treatment may further be reinforced by views of black people as overly expectant. As the above participant argued, black people seemed to expect free or preferential treatment or services and by doing so continued the cycle of oppression, this time against the whites. She further suggested that this sense of entitlement that black people had, was exaggerated. However, statements and views such as the above reinforced a notion of black insensitivity and violence as ever-present. This correlates with a study by Duncan (1976) during which the participants viewed a black male and a white male in a disagreement. The two men ended up by shoving each other. The study showed that the shoving between the two men was described as more violent when the perpetrator was black than when he was white. Similar findings were found by Sagar and Schofield (1980) in their study with children depicting stories with violent acts. Their findings showed that the children rated the acts as being more threatening when a black child performed them in comparison to the white child whose acts were viewed as less mean and less threatening. Children often distorted their memories as was found by Bigler and Liben (1993) in their study with white children. The authors demonstrated that children often changed their memory of the story to fit their stereotypes, something

they took with them into adolescence and adulthood. The memories that people had of such an incident were activated through their encounters with others who were similar to the stored memories (Lewicki, 1985).

Prejudicial views and stereotypes could also be stored in society, as considered in cultural models which described society as the basis of stored knowledge, and stereotypes as public information about social groups that was shared among the individuals within a culture. What this suggested was that stereotypes existed not only in the individuals living in a specific community, but also in the community itself. As Tjafel (1981) proposed, it was important to consider cultural stereotypes because they represented one part of a person's social knowledge and impacted on social behaviour. The "knowledge" of a generalized "other" was passed on through the generations in the form of myths and stories, often highlighting humiliations and traumas imposed by a named opponent (Stovel, 2000). Itzkowitz and Volkan (1994) described these traumas as any event which invoked intense feelings of having been victimized by members of another racial group. The authors argued that groups chose to dwell on an event, incorporating the mental representation of such events into their identities, and passing these on to future generations. For the black participants in the current study, apartheid appears to be such an event which can be seen as an unresolved trauma. The mental representation of apartheid seems to be a vital marker of ethnic identity for the black participants, prohibiting them from interacting leading with members white people.

4.2.5 Language

Racial segregation also manifested as a result of language barriers between the racial groups. Some participants such as the coloured female below avoided contact because she experienced language barriers as she found that black people expected her to speak an indigenous language:

> **"I am Coloured, but many times I get so frustrated, sometimes even angry if I have to explain to yet another Black person that I don't understand whatever it was that they were saying to me in Zulu or something...I can't understand the Moslem language, either, but if the person can speak Afrikaans or English, even badly, if they at least try to speak your language then you are more likely to mix with them".** (CF1)

This black female participant and the coloured male participant also experienced language as a barrier to mixing:

> **"...and then you have the language barriers which is probably why I haven't been able to mix with South Africans because when they see me they expect me to speak Zulu or Tswana or Sotho, and I can't speak any unfortunately. So mixing with non South Africans is easier because you all end up speaking English or something, you know."** (BF2)

> **"...if you don't speak the same language, you do not make any efforts to interact with that person, because how are you going to communicate? To get to know a person, you have to start by talking, unless if you both use sign language..."** (CM1)

For these participants, language appeared to be an obstacle to their inter-racial contact. They shared similar accounts of how they did not want to mix with black people in South Africa due to the fact that they were unable to understand one or other of the black languages. These accounts reflected what many black and coloured people in South Africa were experiencing, namely the fact that being black was automatically paralleled with being able to speak a black language, like Zulu or Sotho. Language was thus used

by the participants as a tool to categorize individuals into groups, and to communicate their stereotypes about them to others (Allport, 1954).

However, as these participants showed, this seemed to be experienced with some frustration, particularly because a specific language was applied to them indiscriminately. This served to cause feelings of distance, misunderstanding and miscommunication among the different groups (Hamburger & McKenna, 2006). It also caused interactions between members of different racial groups to be conducted on a superficial level, or as these participants reflected, an avoidance of inter-racial contact altogether. This frustration with language was however not limited to the black participants only, but also to the white participants, who also seemed to experience frustration due to the language barrier:

> **"With me I have to explain that I am actually not English, I am Afrikaans...I can't even speak English properly, since I came to Wits it has improved but I am a bit hesitant to speak to other people if I think they speak English because I don't want them to laugh at me. When people see me for the first time, and I mean the Whites they automatically assume that I speak Afrikaans and they address me as such... "** (WM2)

Similar to the above male participant, the previous participants felt that they were reluctant to interact with members of other racial groups if there was a communication gap due to difference in languages. Furthermore, if the person from the out-group was unable to communicate clearly in English, most of the participants, both male and female, tended to avoid mixing. This highlights the significance of language and that people use language for various things such as communication to others, to communicate their culture and even their stereotypes about others who are different than them. As Fishman (1956) stated, there was no completely non-verbal social stereotyping because stereotypes were learned, maintained and sometimes even changed through the language

and communication of a culture. The processes of naming, labeling and categorizing were seen to be central to language acquisition. However, Mynhardt & Du Toit (1991) found that if people interacted and became more receptive to favourable information about the other group, it would contribute to a more rapid breakdown of negative categorizing and a generalization of positive attitudes to the group as a whole. For example, Taylor, Dube and Bellerose (1986) reported a study that was carried out at McGill University, an English speaking University in a French speaking area of Canada. The majority of the students (76%) were English speaking and the rest were French speakers. The assumption was that given the relatively high percentage of English speaking students, the French speaking students would engage in more interaction with English speaking students than with French speaking students. However, it was found that the English speaking students interacted with their own in-group members 87% of the time, while the French students reported that 50% of their social interactions were with other French speaking students, a proportion that was double than their representation in the university. In addition, the colour of a person's skin also served as a guideline with regard to the language that people used when interacting with others as some of the participants in the current study echoed. This coloured participant stated:

> **"If you are dark skinned in this country it doesn't matter if you are colored, people automatically think you are Black; you know, these Blacks....and the worst part is, if you try to explain that you don't understand it, they look at you like you are trying to be arrogant or something...now what I do is, if someone says anything I don't understand, I either respond in Afrikaans only, not even English, because then you are saying you want to engage in a conversation, and most of the time you don't, you just want to be left alone."** (CM2)

For this indian participant, skin colour also seemed to be an issue, as she experienced that people judged her based on the colour of her skin.

"People first see your skin color before they see you..." (IF1)

While some participants like the above female, experienced language or skin colour as an obstacle to mixing, others blamed the media's portrayal of black people for the lack of social interaction amongst the group:

> **"There are many opportunities for people to hang out together, but imagine a white guy going into Soweto to visit his friends...not after everything that's printed in the newspapers and in the news, it will be like suicide."** (WM2)

> **"It is mainly because of what happens in society and what the people read in newspapers, see on TV, you know...The whites are never portrayed as being criminals, how many white guys have you read about that have been arrested for hijacking or house break...it is not that they are innocent, it's just that when it does happen, they don't report it...it stays out of the media and this gives people the wrong impression, like the whites are all good and trustworthy. People will never hang out together unless there is maximum security and they feel they are safe, that's when you will see black and white at a function together."** (BM3)

As the above accounts indicated, both the black and the white participants reported that their reluctance for inter-racial mixing was partly a result of how the media portrayed racial groups. For example, the black participants felt that black people were often cast in negative, stereotypical roles by the media in comparison to white people who were not cast as such. For most of the black, coloured and indian participants in the current study, the media emphasized mostly the negative criminal activities regarding their racial groups and rarely on the positive things that were happening in their communities. This reinforced the misguided perceptions that some of the white participants had of black