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

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people such as the fact that it would be suicidal for a white person to go into a black neighborhood like Soweto. As some studies demonstrated, stereotypes did manifest in education and in television shows (Dixon, 1977; Hartmann & Husband, 1974).

The discussions also highlighted the fact that every group looked after its own pride and thought of itself as being superior to the rest, looking down on others groups as being inferior. This suggested that when a particular social category distinction was very pertinent, the person would respond with respect to that specific aspect of his social identity. According to this theory, people were motivated to evaluate themselves positively because they were looking for a positive identity through the establishment of positive distinctiveness of the in-group from relevant out-groups (Tajfel 1978, Brewer & Miller 1984, 1996).

4.2.6 Fear of rejection or judgement

For some of the participants in this study, inter-racial contact was desired, however, they avoided contact out of fear of being judged or rejected by the out-group or even their own race. For example, this coloured female participant feared being judged by coloured people if she mixed with white people. She rationalized this by motivating that there were both positive as well as negative qualities associated with her racial group. She seemed frustrated that she could not fit in with the other racial groups, as she would be judged by both black and white people if she mixed with either of them. She explained that mixing with white people would be seen by her in-group as a rejection of her own race:

> **"Being coloured has its blessings as well as disadvantageous. I think it's better for females, because you are treated differently. But you never seem to fit in anywhere. You cannot mix with the Blacks or the Whites; you're kind of in between. If you do have white friends, the other colored people will say, she thinks she is White."** (CF2)

Similarly, this black female participant stated that mixing with members of other racial groups would be interpreted by black people that she thought that she was better than them, in other words, a rejection of her own group. In order to avoid being judged, she also did not mix with white people:

> **"Yeah, they'll think who does she think she is, she thinks she is better than us..."** (BF4)

4.3 MEDIUM CONTACT

4.3.1 Interests

Medium contact occurred when participants were involved only in a few interactions with members of another culture or race on less frequent occasions such as sports (Triandis & Vassiliou, 1966). For some participants in the current study, having a sense of belonging to those who were similar to them, with parallel interests was more important than social contact with others who were different as the conformity to the in-group seemed vital:

> **"Sometimes it's about whether you are both willing and committed to make the friendship work because in the end you mix with those who make you feel like you belong."** (CF3)

> **"We do not have the same interests, in actual fact, you don't want to focus any attention on yourself by going against your group. Group conformity is very important, because ultimately you stand up for each other."** (WM3)

These participants reported having differences in interests as a barrier to social contact, especially as it took personal commitment as well as a willingness to form friendships with the out-group, suggesting that strong pressure for out-group association was

generally lacking between racial groups. However, as Blau (1997) demonstrated, the level of social contact between individuals with different social characteristics was affected by the distribution of heterogeneity in the population. Blau (1997) showed that increasing heterogeneity results in the reduction of social barriers and increases the chances of social contact among the racial groups. In spite of having an optimal chance at the University of the Witwatersrand to reduce the perceived barriers, participants in the current study still segregate along racial lines. As the previous participants echoed, group conformity seemed much more important than the desire for inter-group mixing.

For the white male participant below, "rejection" played a vital role in his avoidance of inter-racial contact. It seemed like he wanted to interact with members of other racial groups, but found it too much of a risk in fear of being rejected. This was enough for him to stick with his own group:

> **"Rejection is critical which is why I have not made as much an effort as I normally do because I fear I might be rejected. I then avoid mixing altogether because I do not see for example Indians being receptive to my being their friend and that's an honest statement. I don't see it happening on this campus, and I don't see it in South Africa but you might find one who might. I think rejection is huge, people don't want to be rejected, they just stick with what they know."** (WM3)

This fear of rejection seemed to be a barrier to inter-racial contact, despite the fact that this participant usually made an effort to mix. These accounts from the participants highlight the fact that in spite of having ample opportunity for inter-group mixing, participants continue mixing only with those people who were members of their own in-group in fear of being judged or rejected by them, or by out-group members.

4.3.2 Comfort zone

Some of the participants emphasized "comfort zone" as an obstacle to contact as it was more important for them to stick to what felt comfortable to them, and what was familiar to them from their personal backgrounds. One of the underlying assumptions from the Contact Hypothesis was that conflict arose from lack of information about the other group and from lacking opportunities to obtain information about members of the other group (Amir & Ben-Ari, 1988). Here some of the black and white participants reflect why they continuously cluster to their own racial groups:

> **" ...and I am a person that enjoys difference, there comes a point where you actually just want to be in your comfort zone, and you don't want to have to explain why you want to do this, or why you eat this way or what...There comes a point where you just have preferences and people tend to be with people who have the same preferences as well, and unfortunately that's been separated based on race as one thing, but I think it goes way deeper than race actually."** (BF8)

> **"What I am saying is the challenge lies in talking to a white person, because you don't feel that everyone else is doing it and that's how we think. If we see a lot of people mixing, it will be so easy. You are not going to have a lot of courageous people who step out of their comfort zone and say "to hell with what I have learnt at home". You will find maybe one or two individuals who will step out of their comfort zones, but they are the minority."** (BM6)

These participants reflected similar preferences, namely that they found it easier to remain in their comfort zones due to differences that existed between the groups. The desire was there to mix, however, this was perceived as challenging, ascribed to group

differences, personal preferences and a lack of knowledge about the out-group. Participants conformed to their groups and to what felt comfortable to them. According to Buttny (1997) contact must be "frequent" and "intimate" enough to capsize the sense of difference that existed between the racial groups. According to one of the white female participants in this study, there were diverse races and cultures at the university, and although it appeared as if there was mixing between white and black students at the University of the Witwatersrand, however there was no mixing. Similarly a black female participant expressed concern that even in society there was no inter-racial mixing, and that it was based on "separateness" and "division. Accounts like these highlighted the fact that having an opportunity to interact with others did not guarantee mixing; despite the various opportunities available to them, participants were still segregating into their own racial groups:

> **"There is no mixing; the blacks are in their own groups and the whites in theirs. There are so many people here, different races and cultures, and it seems like we are mixing, but in reality there is no mixing."** (WF1)

> **"...I feel like South Africa is very unique in terms of separation. It is a place that's really based on separateness and division and then, how do you conquer that? It's tricky."** (BF7)

> **"Yeah...I totally agree with her, because, we are not mixing here. There are opportunities to mix here, but it ends here. I would not go into Hillbrow for example. Have you seen white people in Hillbrow?"** (BF5)

> **"...the university can do much more to get people to mix; we are far away from really being a democracy because there is division everywhere."** (BM2)

The above views reflect how complex the issue of inter-racial contact is as the various participants attempted to explain the reasons why they were not mixing with out-group members. Participants from all the racial groups in the current study agreed that there were opportunities for inter-group mixing; however, there seemed to be a feeling of disappointment from some of the black participants that this opportunity was lost, as the groups self-segregated and the inter-group distance grew bigger. For example, one black female participant seemingly concurred with the previous black participant that South Africa was based on "division" and "separateness" as she motivated that there was no mixing at all. However, she then stated that she would not go into Hilbrow and motivated this by asking "have you seen white people in Hilbrow". She was black, and by stating that she would never go into Hilbrow, it seemed as if she somehow chose not to identify with her in-group. The university was also critiqued of not doing enough to encourage more inter-racial mixing by one of the black male participants who suggested that more could be done by the university to encourage racial integration. He felt that South Africa was still far from really being a democracy because there was segregation everywhere.

Next a discussion of participants who interacted with people from other races in certain contexts but not in others follows.

4.4 MAXIMUM CONTACT

4.4.1 Unavoidable Contact

From the previous discussions, it seemed apparent that participants positioned themselves in different ways by either explaining or criticizing the racial differences and self-segregation that were apparent in their world, such as in their residential areas or on their campuses. From the discussions below, there were some participants who seemed to mix with members of other racial group on a more regular basis at the University.

According to Triandis and Vassiliou (1966) inter-group contact was proportional to the amount of personal interaction that a person had with members of another culture on a daily basis. The mixing seemed to occur in contexts when it was often difficult or not possible to avoid inter-racial contact, such as at universities where black and white participants had to attend lectures together in the same venues. Triandis and Vassiliou (1966) classified this type on unavoidable contact as maximum contact. However, the same participants did not mix with members in there residential suburbs, even if such suburbs were racially integrated. This was reflected in the accounts of some of the white participants who did not seem to have substantial or consistent contact with members of other racial groups before attending university. This was attributed to various factors, such as racial and residential segregation which seemed to result in people identifying and mixing with their own in-groups. The University setting was seen as the perfect opportunity to interact with members from the different racial groups, and participants reported that they started off excited to make new friends, and to interact. However, they also reported that it was not that easy to mix with students from other racial groups on a social level, and that even at Wits where a high level of contact was possible, the groups were clearly segregated as could be seen in the way that students clustered to friends and others who belonged to their racial group. For one white female participant, going to university gave her the opportunity to mix with members of other racial groups and she regarded this as a new and positive experience:

> **"For me it's a new experience, coming to university and meeting so many people from different races, cities, even countries. Before you come to University you think about how it is going to be like, and you don't know what to expect until you get there...it is definitely possible for us to interact peacefully because we are one body, its not about colour, or race, or superiority anymore...that's what I think".** (WF8)

While it was possible that other participants had similar experiences like the above female, it seemed that university could provide a "new beginning" for those entering

higher education for the first time (Caul, 1993). However, Cairns (1998) argued that it was very naïve to expect socially and culturally divided groups to integrate harmoniously, just as a result of their meeting. Below, the same white female participant continued to refer to her residential suburb as one of the contexts where she did not have inter-racial contact and mixed only with white people. She was still living in the same suburb. However, she later had unavoidable contact as they employed a person from a different racial group, which she described as a positive experience. She however continued to state that she only really started mixing at the university because she had no choice:

> **"I did not really have much contact with black people where im from...especially because I grew up in a white suburb, and im still living in the same white suburb...I mean, you see only your own kind, so you mix only with them. I was not exposed to black people in our house, you know, like having a black domestic or something. It is only a few years back that we employed a coloured woman, actually, she is still young, a couple of years older than me, but we don't spent a lot of time together apart from when she comes to work. So things like those, but I must say, interacting with her is a positive experience for me. So, as I said, I only really started to mix with other races at university, first where I did my undergrad, and now here at Wits...uhm... when I say mix, I mean, you have no choice here at varsity to mix with others...you mix in class, and you talk, but it is definitely mixing, because this is something that you wont see where I live, even now."** (WF8)

Similarly, this white female participant had little contact with black people socially; however, she seemed to have much contact with their domestic at their home:

> **"...I had lots of contact with our domestic worker, she was almost like a mother, or she acted like one...besides her I did**

> **not really interact with other black people, but it did affect the way I see other black people. You can't see every black person as bad; there are good people out there."** (WF4)

From the above discussions, the one white participant grew up in a segregated suburb, and was later exposed to a member of another racial group in her household, allowing her the opportunity to interact on a personal level. She accounted for her lack of mixing with in-group members by mentioning that she grew up in a white suburb and was still living in one, exposed only to members of her own racial group. She described that she was never exposed to black people, but later had contact with a coloured woman who worked for them. The participant seems to draw on a color-blind rhetoric to support her account of inter-group contact, showing that she partly identified with the coloured women, seeing past the colour issue. However, it seemed that she was reluctant to mix with other races on campus, and did so because it was unavoidable. In the past, black and white people in South Africa were generally prevented from mixing, influencing their perceptions of each other. As the above participants expressed, white children often had little or no exposure to black people, except for their contact with their domestic worker (Aboud, 1988). For example, the white male participant below was allowed to interact with his black friends in certain contexts, such as at school. However, in other contexts, such as at home, he was not allowed to bring his friends home:

> **"My parents had no problem if I interacted at school with my black friends, but I was never allowed to bring them home with me to visit. My father had a black friend at work, because he often spoke to him on the phone and asked him how his family was....but he never invited him home. It made me feel uncomfortable, because we did not really speak about it, but there was this unspoken rule. And occasionally, if I wanted to bring someone home, my father would ask whether the person was black or white, and it is so not relevant. It**

made me kind of rebellious, because today I actually prefer hanging out with different kinds of people." (WM6)

Similarly, for this white female participant, she seemed comfortable going to the movies with her idian friends; however, she did not feel at ease taking them to her house. She also described her relationship with her coloured friend whom she seemed to interact with at school, but did not often visit. She seemed to experience this as odd and acknowledged it as such; however she ascribed it to her need to "fit in" and act "appropriately":

"It has not always been like this...I have indian friends, but if I don't really feel comfortable to take them out to my house...going out to the movies is ok, but if you are the only white person in the group then you feel out. I have a coloured friend, she went to the same high school, and we live close, but we don't visit often...that is also strange. I think for me it is important to fit in, nobody wants to stand out, so you act appropriately." (WF5)

This indian female participant also reflected the same sentiment:

"....I'm from an indian community where it was predominantly Indian people. But there's also many black people moving in, so for as long as I can remember it was kind of mixed, but there is not much mixing except maybe when you work together... that's pretty much the only relationship you have with them...and also, most Indian people are very conservative, and those who are more liberal are usually seen as socially deviant...if you mix with a white person then it seems to be ok, you know, living in a white location, or having white friends...but if you move into a black location it is somehow unacceptable, almost like you are going against everything you

know...and then people assume you must be bankrupt that's why you are moving into a black location...but today with equal laws and all, anyone can live where they want and that is cool" (IF3)

Like the previous white participants, the indian female participant also stated that she mixed in certain contexts. Just like one of the white participants, she was living in a segregated suburb which quickly became desegregated after apartheid when she found more black people moving in. She mentioned that she did not really mix with any black people, except when it was unavoidable due to work. She seemed to disassociate herself from the black people by referring to "them" and attempted to motivate this by describing that indian people were "very conservative" and that mixing with black people would be seen as "socially deviant". The participant then drew a parallel between white and black people, stating that it was considered to be "ok" to mix with white people but not with black people. This seemed to imply that mixing with a black person was seen as unbecoming. Once again, the accounts from the participants emphasized the fact that there were barriers keeping the groups from interacting. It seemed apparent that both the white and the black participants showed a preference for interaction with other racial groups in certain instances but not in others. According to Jackman and Crane (1986) it was difficult to facilitate increased levels of interaction between students from different racial groups because it often required a highly structured event. They argued that a non-competitive environment was also needed which may be difficult to achieve as people tend to be competitive in nature. University projects, concerts, and sport drew many black and white people together, and promoted an understanding of the various racial groups. However, for some participants, as in Schofield's (1986) study, the "psychological benefits" of multiracial classrooms were frequently undermined by the recurrence of racial segregation visible in the way the racial groups clustered on campus. For one participant, it was very obvious that people isolated themselves even at the sports field, as he observed every afternoon, when he went jogging on campus. Mixing with other races on campus seemed a positive experience for him; however, he observed much racial clustering at the stadium:

> **"I felt very happy when I mixed with others but also sad when I look around me and see that not everyone is mixing; people are still playing alone on the stadium, the blacks with the blacks and so on."** (BM8)

This indian female participant echoed:

> **"I have been at Wits now for two years, and I haven't really gone out of my way to get close to others, it's just too much energy ...I know a few of my classmates, because we attend the same lectures and have been together since first year, but we don't do anything together besides projects etc...I mean, you can sit next to the same person everyday in a lecture and not even know their name, despite the fact that you greet each other every day or smile."** (IF3)

The above participant's account may be perceived as indifference towards mixing, as she did not go out of her way to interact socially with her classmates despite sharing the same space with them. This is supported by Maoz (2002) who demonstrated that sitting together in the same space did not necessarily entail significant interaction between members of different groups. Group members often avoided inter-group contact deliberately and clustered along racial lines, a pattern which was also evident in schools:

> **"Schools do try their best to encourage interaction, but its not enough because during break times its still blacks with blacks, whites with whites even though we are now sharing the schools..."** (IM2)

> **"I went to an all white school, and although I am not a racist, I was very reluctant to interact with black people. With black people I mean indians and african, coloureds, even japanese and**

chinese...basically if you were not white and spoke either Afrikaans or English fluently, I would not go out of my way to befriend you. I was never rude though, I just kept my distance, but deep down I always thought of them as being dangerous, they can't be trusted, they would probably attack me, I'm talking about the males. I chose Wits because it's close to our home and because I wanted to be close to my family. I think maybe also because a friend of mine is dating a coloured guy, and he is cute. I met him once, and he was ok, and since I've been here at Wits now for 2 years, I've made a few friends, not close, but I did. I found that not everyone who is black is a criminal, they are also attacked just like us and they also have fears, and dreams, just like us. I am more positive towards them now, and I think also more open to talking to them. But I would not take it further than that...I mean, I would go out with them, but then there must be other white people there, I would not like to be the only white person there." (WF4)

The above participant held negative views about people of other racial groups. However, after her friend started dating a coloured male, the participant seemed to be more accepting of other groups. She identified to an extent with some members of the out-group; however, by using the terms "them" and us she seemed to still keep her distance from the groups. This was confirmed when she said that although she was more positive towards black people, she would not take it further than that. She indicated that the only context in which she would interact with black people would be if there were other white people present. Despite having contact with members of the out-group under the conditions which were facilitating for positive contact, she remained prejudicial and reluctant to mix in some contexts. According to the Contact Hypothesis contact between members of different groups would improve relations between them as was demonstrated in the above account. However, contact only increased or decreased prejudice and

stereotyping, depending on the kind of people involved in the situation (Allport, 1954, 1979).

For example, Luiz and Krige (1981) conducted a study to improve interracial attitudes in a school by using a programme based on the conditions outlined by the contact hypothesis. By using white school girls from a predominantly white school and coloured girls from a predominantly coloured school, they tested before and after the scholars participated in the programme. Their results showed that both the white and the coloured scholars had more positive attitudes towards each other after the activity programme that they were involved in than before. According to Mynhardt and du Toit (1991) interracial contact in schools and living areas could lead to positive racial attitudes, as was seen from the experiences of some of the participants in the present study. Whether this interaction improved racial relations was not a given as stated by some of the indian and black participants below:

> **"It is so long after apartheid and we have achieved so much together as a nation, but people still have negative perceptions. Suburbs now are not mainly white or black or coloured anymore. You can go to an Indian suburb and find that half the people living there are black. You don't find many coloureds living in our suburbs, no whites, but lots of blacks. So what does that tell you...we can live together, we can attend the same school, and we can even have friends of different races, but whether the entire community will accept it remains to be seen."** (IM4)

This black female participant below highlighted an important fact that there was inter-racial mixing with the out-group in some context, and that this pattern of medium contact was also reflected within the in-group amongst members of the same racial group:

> **"I would say there are various levels of mixing...within your own race, you also mix differently. If you are black, you may be Zulu or something else, so you would not necessarily mix with someone just because you are both black. ."** (BF1)

For example, Dixon and Durrheim (2003) recorded spatial patterns of assembly and distribution between the different racial groups at a beach in KwaZulu-Natal over the Christmas holiday period. They observed the contact that the members of the various groups were having and found that the contact was characterized by both integration and segregation. According to the authors, there was little interracial contact and there was a recurring pattern of informal segregation. This supported what both the black and the white participants echoed, namely that there were times and places when they interacted, and other contexts during which they mixed with or within their racial group. For some of these participants however, interacting with individuals from other races made them realize that they share similar attitudes and values, and they were able to form friendships with a few individuals at the university.

Some participants seemed happy to have friends from diverse cultural backgrounds. They were positive about the future, and felt optimistic that there would be more interaction in South Africa in future. When asked whether there were any opportunities for mixing, they responded affirmatively. They saw opportunities everywhere for interacting with members of other races, but felt that people did not always make use of such opportunities. Furthermore they described such opportunities as few and planned, not natural, and that people only interact when they have to, but if they have a choice to interact or not, they would rather not. From the discussions it was evident that participants came from different schools and related to others who came from the same or similar schools. Schofield and Sagar's (1977) found in their study of seating arrangements in school cafeterias that integration in terms of the overall ratio of black to white students in a school or university is no guarantee of integration at the level of meaningful social interaction.

"I can definitely speak for many other black students if I say that putting lots of whites and blacks together doesn't change anything much...I went from school to school, and I observed how during break time all the Indians would sit together, all the whites together, there were few colored kids, they usually were the minority and now that I think of it, they kind of didn't belong anywhere, sometimes they hung out with the blacks, then the whites or indians, but mostly you would find them all huddled together...and I would of course be with my black friends....I mean, we never did anything together, even in front of the tuck shop you'd see how the groups were racialized...and same thing is so apparent here on campus, I mean, just look around, where do you see blacks and whites eating together in the cafeteria, its each to his or her own, and if you see your class mate, you just greet, but you will never get up and like join your table...so, university is a place I think you find lots of different races, and on the surface it seems like they are mixing, you know, running from lecture to lecture, or in the library, but if you listen really carefully at the conversations, its mostly work related, and it's so superficial. I mean, I can be your class mate now here, at Wits, but the minute it's over, and we split, like go into Braamfontein or somewhere, you all of a sudden become a color, you're then just another black face, or white face, and everyone is scared of the other group, and you hold your bag tighter, especially the Whites coz oh there's a black man he looks like he wants to grab my bag..." (BF4)

For one of the above participants, attending a school where she interacted with other racial groups did not change her attitudes or preference for her own in-group. She reported that there was some inter-racial mixing but that it was mainly superficial, and that there was no social contact outside the school yard. According to Clark and Ayers

(1992) children were primarily motivated by compatible personality characteristics to initiate cross-race close friendships. Interestingly, children chose a same race peer as a friend rather than a cross-race peer if there was a significant number of his in-group in the same class. This seems to be similar to the pattern that is currently observable at the University of the Witwatersrand, as the black, white, coloured and indian participants in the current study reported having more friends of their own racial groups, interacted only with those they shared the same race, language and felt comfortable with, and then only in some but not other contexts. Furthermore, the spaces at schools which the participants in this study attended were racialized; a pattern which is clearly still visible at the university of the Witwatersrand. This can be explained if one looks at the apartheid system that was used to regulate spaces and life to keep the racial groups apart as discussed in previous chapters of the current study. This was particularly evident in government schools, which were rigidly segregated until the early 1990s, severely limiting opportunities for any contact between individuals who came from different racial groups. Schools which were previously predominantly reserved for one racial group were now open to all the races in South Africa. This has created increased opportunities for contact between the different racial groups. However, participants still expressed negative or stereotypical and prejudicial views about the out-groups which affected their resulting behavior of racial clustering. Aarons (1991) found in his study that the white group showed high level of own-group preference as well as high out-group prejudice as in the present study. In addition, those participants who had medium contact with the out-group reported that the contact was often more illusory than real (Taylor et al., 1986). Several reasons were suggested as underlying this tendency, such as the desire to avoid the uncomfortable feelings that arose in contact with people who were stigmatized (Stephan & Stephan, 1996), the expectations of inter-group differences in norms and roles (Landis, Hope & Day, 1984) and the motivation to avoid conflict and confrontation (Taylor et al., 1986). Next, a summary of the conclusions reached in the current study will be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

This chapter gives a summary of the conclusions reached in this study as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research. The study shows that there is a lack of contact between black and white university students and that prejudice, race, economic status, stereotypes, language and fear of being judged or rejected by the in-group or out-group play a vital role in the apparent segregation on campus as well as socially. The findings show that social categorization continuously occurs around race and plays a key role in the maintenance of the segregation of the racial groups, forming the basis of racial stereotypes and prejudices. Each racial group in this study evaluated itself more favorably than the out-group, and participants preferred adherence to their own group members with a reluctance to interact with members of other racial groups. This result is similar to the result of Wilhelm (1994) that revealed that a collective identity was formed around the concept of race which determined interactions with other racial groups.

The findings also show that despite the fact that residential suburbs were now desegregated, only people who were economically in a better position were able to move into formerly white suburbs. However, white people did not seem to move into black neighborhoods and seemed unhappy with the influx of black people into their neighborhoods. Furthermore, the findings indicate that students also attribute the lack of intergroup mixing to conflicting interests, a lack of understanding among the groups and feeling uncomfortable when mixing with members of other races. Students in this study felt it was more important to feel comfortable and remain in their comfort zones than interacting with people who belonged to different racial groups. For the participants in the current study maximum contact with people from other racial groups occurred only when it was unavoidable such as on campus. This contact was of a superficial nature, and there were seldom any friendships that were formed as a result of this type of interaction. Furthermore, the contact was not extended to social contact beyond the

borders of the university, as the participants did not explore other avenues for mixing. This was true especially for the white students in particular who reported having friends from another racial group with whom they interacted regularly only within the university context, but never at their homes. This was ironic as the university was one setting which met the conditions as suggested by Allport (1954). As the numerous accounts of the participants reflected, the findings of the current study clearly show that black, coloured, white and indian students continue to cluster along their racial lines, clearly contradicting Allport's hypothesis.

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that black and white students mix with members of their own racial groups despite having optimal conditions for inter-racial contact on campus. Also, despite the frequency and amount of intergroup contact that students have at Wits and beyond, positive relations do not seem to be established between members of the various racial groups. This might be due to the fact that the contact is highly task-oriented and not very intimate and hence do not promote disconfirmed stereotypes in general (Ostreng, 2001). The current study also shows that the various factors discussed under the three main categories in chapter four were barriers which the participants used as a way to manage their contact with out-group members. Furthermore, most of the students in this study echoed that not enough was done by the university to encourage racial integration, hence the continuing racial clustering on campus.

5.1 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The data in this study was collected from a relatively small sample of students within one university campus, hence limiting the generalizability of the results. The goal with qualitative research is not necessarily to be able to generalize the findings; however, the extent to which this sample is reflective of the broad student population may be limited. Also, the extent to which the results from this study can be applied to diverse populations

is hence limited. Unlike quantitative research which derives firm estimations of the prevalence of some occurrence in a population, focus group based qualitative research focuses on finding the meanings and understandings bestowed by participants on their experiences through interpretation. This implies that larger-scale quantitative studies are required before any definite conclusions can be reached regarding the extent to which the experiences highlighted in this research are reflective of the broad student population.

Furthermore, participation in the study was voluntary, and the participants were selected in terms of their willingness to participate in the focus groups. In addition, a snowball pattern was utilized, during which the researcher requested 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 group discussions. This may have given rise to a biased sample as a certain type of participant may have been attracted to the study, ultimately influencing the generalisibility of the findings. Furthermore, the present study could not claim that the factors which were explored embodied the full repertoire of barriers to inter-group mixing. However, it is hoped that the multiple realities of the participants in this study were represented as adequately and as accurately as possible.

Another possible limitation was that the different facilitators all had various levels of skills regarding interviewing. The author was also not present during their focus group discussions which could have impacted upon the discussions. The data was transcribed by the author as well as by a qualified transcriber; however, it is not certain what his level of skill was.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of the limitations, the current study is significant as the complex subject of inter-racial contact has long been the focus of many social scientists seeking an understanding

of inter-group relations. This qualitative study explored the lack of contact between black and white students by focusing on the barriers to such contact, thus providing a credible space for the participants to voice their accounts regarding racial segregation.

This was also the first study of its kind to be done at the University of the Witwatersrand with its past history of racial segregation and hence is pertinent to the local experience of inter-racial contact and the perceived barriers to contact between black and white students enrolled at this university. The findings reported in this study have some important implications regarding the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954). As already discussed in previous chapters, the hypothesis maintains that contact under optimal conditions can reduce prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, the present findings demonstrate that black and white students at the University of the Witwatersrand seemingly interact in an environment where there is equal status between the groups, common goals, inter-group cooperation and support from the authorities. Contrary to Allport's hypothesis, segregation continues to manifest along racial lines.

Overall, the current study shows that racial stereotypes and prejudice exert a strong influence on how students think and act, suggesting that students who have a high level of prejudice against members of other racial groups seemingly act in line with the negative stereotypes about their specific in-group. It is hence important that future studies build on the current work by exploring why this happens and detect those factors which hinder the reduction of prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This is vital as most of the participants in the study felt that not enough was done by the University of the Witwatersrand to address the obvious lack of contact on campus, and that more could be done to encourage more social contact between students on campus and beyond. The University would thus benefit from future studies of this nature which not only explore in depth the apparent racial clustering on campus, but also examine the behavioral tendencies of black and white students who harbor strong prejudicial and racial stereotypes, for they reinforce racial separation and the achievement of more positive inter-group relations on campus.

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