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"INTERRACIAL CONTACT" – AN EXPLORATION OF THE LACK OF CONTACT BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS

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A research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, 2008

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DECLARATION

I, Eutricia Eugené Euzee Conradie, declare that this thesis is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed: Conradie

Date: 20 April 2009

ABSTRACT

The South African constitution endorses equal rights for all the racial groups. It was hoped that interracial contact would occur spontaneously as the different racial groups started integrating in post apartheid South Africa. However, it is unrealistic to expect immediate integration upon mixing, especially when taking into account that the racial groups were segregated for a long time. It is evident that people segregate themselves according to their racial groups, despite the fact that it is not legislatively enforced anymore. Segregation seems to act as a barrier to contact even in diverse settings such as universities where there are optimal conditions for interracial contact to take place.

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore the lack of contact between black and white students. Eight focus groups with a total of 53 participants, stratified by race (white, black, coloured and indian) and gender (male and female) were conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand. The data was then transcribed and thematically analyzed to identify common themes. A number of recurring themes emerged which were grouped under three main categories, namely minimum contact, medium contact and maximum contact. The first category included themes around prejudice, race, economic status, stereotypes, language and fear of rejection or judgement; the second category included themes regarding differences in interests and the issue of comfort zone, a theme which has not been explored before at Wits. The last category explored the contexts during which it was impossible for participants to avoid contact. These results confirm and explain the reality of continued segregation amongst tertiary level students in the South African context. Contrary to the contact hypothesis, the results indicate that black and white students at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) do not mix or explore avenues for mixing with out-group members and preferred interaction with members of their own racial groups.

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NOTE ON RACIAL CLASSIFICATION

It is important to note that the different racial groups in South Africa were officially classified by the National Party as white, coloured, african and indian (Wilhelm, 1994). For the purpose of this paper, black refers to people of indigenous African origin, coloured refers to people of mixed decent, and indian refers to people descended from the indian subcontinent (Finchilescu & Dawes, 1998). The use of these terms in the current study may be found disagreeable by the participants in or readers of the research and does not imply any acceptance of their validity by the researcher.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1994 democratic dispensation, South Africa was governed by apartheid legislation, which was described as "...the legalized segregation of people on the basis of their race or ethnicity" (Christopher, 1990, p. 421). The initial philosophy underlying apartheid was that conflict and prejudice would disappear if extensive contact between the racial groups were eliminated (Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991). This segregation focused predominantly on the division of black and white people, both in the personal and social contact spheres, leading to negative perceptions that discouraged socialization across the races and the development of interracial friendships. The white people belonged to a privileged group, and this imbalance in social relations caused much racial tension. The Extension of Universities Act of 1959 decreed that South African universities be segregated along racial lines, and learners from the different racial groups attended separate educational institutions as a result (Mabokela & King, 2001).

However, the democratic elections of 1994 removed all the segregationist laws which kept the racial groups from mixing without any restraints. This allowed all South Africans the opportunity to mix freely with equal access to all public areas, educational institutions and residential suburbs. While in current day South Africa, segregation was not enforced anymore, both urban and rural areas continued to be segregated with racial groups remaining separated from one another in complex ways (Christopher, 2001; Dixon, 2001). This suggests that informal segregation is still the norm in public areas and institutions (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Similarly in other countries, contact between the groups had increased in some settings such as the employment sector; however, white and black people continued leading separate lives in the social sphere (Hacker, 1992).

Recent research demonstrated that there was racial segregation at educational institutions such as universities. For example, Schrieff, Tredoux, Dixon & Finchilescu (2005) observed the seating patterns of university students in their university residence dining rooms. They asserted that inter-racial interactions continued to reflect informal and semi-

voluntary segregation and racism in people's "spatial" and "linguistic" practices. The results from their study suggested that there was segregation regarding where people preferred to sit, and that the racial groups preferred to occupy different areas within accessible public spaces at the University of Cape Town (UCT). A similar study explored the seating patterns of students in informal public spaces at the same university (Tredoux, Dixon, Underwood, Nunez & Finchilescu, 2005). They found that some university spaces such as the "Jameson steps" were used more by white students and less by the other racial groups. This finding is consistent with previous literature which was conducted in educational settings in other countries (Clack, Dixon & Tredoux, 2005; Schofield and Sagar, 1977; Sagar, Schofield and Snyder, 1983 as cited in Schrief et al, 2005). This implied that racial segregation was not particular to universities in South Africa, but that the same pattern was visible at universities in other countries (Buttney, 1999). Similarly, contact within the same ethnic group seemed more frequent than inter-group contact in desegregated areas such as universities in other countries (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Schofield, 1986).

For example, Schofield and Sagar (1977) examined face-to-face and side-by-side eating arrangements in a racially desegregated school's dining area. They found that mixing was limited across racial and gender lines, particularly for girls and older children, and that racial contact was infrequent, despite the fact that the children were able to share the same eating space. As Maoz (2002, p.193) concluded, that just because members of different racial groups "...are sitting together in the same space does not necessarily create or entail significant interaction between them". Consistent with this finding, Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch and Combs (1996) argued that spatial segregation tended to produce social separation between the racial groups. According to a study released in November 2004 by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), 36% of South Africans had no cross-racial contact in their daily interactions (up from 26% in April 2003) and 56% had no cross-racial contact when they socialized (Robinson, 2005).

This pattern of social segregation was reflected in universities and other institutions of higher education which were in a context of diversity, continuing segregation and inequality (Leibowitz et al, 2007). Steel (1996) asserted that there was a climate of separateness; a "new segregation" which could be commonly seen on university campuses in the way that different racial groups socially clustered among themselves. Buttny (1999) discussed two different models to explain this new segregation, namely "the social support model" and the "integrationist model". According to the social support model, black students were considered "numerical minorities" on most university campuses, hence in their social lives; they required the support of their cultural groups and organizations to succeed in higher education. The integrationist model suggested that if children of different backgrounds grew up and were educated together, they would get to know one another and not develop the same stereotypes and prejudices of their elders. Triandis (1994) provided evidence that learning about an out-group improved inter-group stereotypes and attitudes.

Naidoo (1996) indicated that integration could be achieved when positive inter-group contact had been fostered; and that it involved more than just physical proximity of different racial groups in one institution and inter-racial interactions in diverse settings where people were provided with equal status and opportunities. For example, Chang (1999) found in his study with students in higher educational settings in other countries, that the likelihood of students engaging with those from different racial groups and backgrounds increased as the diversity of the university increased. Universities that were more racially and ethnically diverse created more diverse educational and inter-racial experiences. Similarly, Patchen (1982) indicated that black and white high school students who had the most positive earlier inter-racial experiences were more positive towards the other racial groups.

However, although such diversity offered rich opportunities for learning and growth, differences between the racial groups also served as fertile ground for stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Steele, Choi & Ambady, 2001). Stereotypes, prejudice and

discrimination were some of the factors that acted as barriers to contact. Wolf (1960) suggested that barriers to contact arose from the situation itself, but also from people's tendencies to associate primarily with members of their own group and the perception of out-group members as "invaders". For example, in a study of racial contact, Dixon and Durrheim (2003) explored inter-racial interactions on a desegregated beach in South Africa. They described the racial composition of the beach as reasonably representative of South African society; however, they found that the people maintained a variety of territorial barriers to racial interaction. This resulted in very low rates of inter-racial contact, with over 97% of interactions occurring between members of the same racial group. For Amir (1976) these barriers were caused by actual differences between groups in language, religion and perceived status. According to Dixon (2001) people sought to navigate real or imagined barriers that continued to separate their communities; however how they responded to and during their interactions held a potential for tension and miscommunication (Plant, 2004).

Tropp and Pettigrew (2006) suggested that black and white people responded in distinct ways to inter-racial contact, given their different histories of experience within the broader society. One of the determining factors of how people responded when such contact occurs was anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). The authors emphasized that inter-group anxiety occurred when people anticipated that contact with members of the out-group would result in negative consequences. Anxiety was described as an "avoidance-related" response which people experienced regarding inter-racial interactions, and which resulted in people avoiding such interactions if given a choice (Plant, 2004; Plant & Devine, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

In addition to anxiety, people brought a diverse set of interpersonal concerns to social interactions which guided their perceptions and behaviours (Shelton, 2003). These interpersonal concerns centered on issues of prejudice which shaped inter-racial interactions. For example, Shelton and Richeson (2005) explored individuals' formulations of their own and members of the out-group's avoidance of inter-group

contact. The authors argued that people failed to recognize that out-group members' avoidance of inter-group contact reflected the same interpersonal concerns as their own. For example, both white and black people harbored fears that they would be rejected because of their group memberships (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). The authors argued that white people felt that black people thought they were prejudiced, resulting in their concern that black people would reject them during interactions. Vorauer, Hunter, Main, Kelly and Roy (2000) also suggested that white people were concerned with how they would be viewed and treated as members of their racial group during inter-racial interactions. Similarly, black people felt that white people held negative stereotypes about their group and were thus concerned that white people would reject them during interactions. These fears from both racial groups influenced the dynamics of inter-group interactions as well as people's explanations for why they avoided inter-group interactions altogether (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Nonetheless, through a negotiation process, people used strategies that facilitated positive interactions with out-group members (Swann, 1987). When people integrated and had positive contact with members of different racial groups they realized that they shared similar values and beliefs (Steele, Choi & Ambady, 2001) and their attitudes improved (Amir, 1976; Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

However, Miller (1980) argued that desegregation was not enough; facilitating conditions were necessary for people to mix socially. According to Allport (1954) the facilitating conditions that led to positive inter-group relations were equal status within the situation, common goals, inter-group cooperation and institutional support. Several other conditions were later added with the most important of these being voluntary participation and intimate contact (Amir, 1969; Amir, 1976). Pettigrew (1998) emphasized the importance of distinguishing between conditions that were essential as opposed to being merely facilitating for contact to have positive effects. The author specified that Allport's four conditions as well as a fifth one, namely "friendship potential" were essential situational factors for positive inter-group outcomes.

A university is one such milieu where facilitating conditions for inter-racial contact are more likely, yet segregation remains the norm. In addition, contact between students of different ethnic or racial groups tends to be superficial (Slavin, 1985). Despite the fact that there is friendship potential in a cooperative environment, institutional support and equal status between members of the different racial groups, they often avoided inter-racial contact deliberately, or make use of a variety of strategies to re-segregate themselves by their original ethnic groups (Eller & Abrams, 2004, Schofield, 1986).

There seems to be a gap in the literature exploring the factors that act as hindrances to interracial contact in a university setting, particularly at the University of the Witwatersrand. The current chapter hence forms an introduction to the study, providing the aim of the study and its objectives, namely to identify the barriers to interracial contact between black and white students. The objective of the study focuses on exploring whether there is inter-racial mixing; whether there are opportunities for contact; what the black and white participants perceive as the barriers to mixing and their perceptions on whether there is going to be a time in South Africa during which the racial groups will mix socially. The next chapter reviews the existing social and psychological research and literature on inter-racial contact.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the dynamics involved in inter-group contact in an attempt to identify the barriers to inter-racial mixing. The chapter begins by laying a basis for the understanding of the contact hypothesis, a key theoretical framework underpinning inter-group relations, followed by an exploration of the factors that act as a hindrance to positive inter-group relations. The key question that this chapter attempts to answer therefore is why there seems to be continuous segregation along racial lines.

Despite research that shows the positive effects of desegregation (Schofield, 1995), it is still a controversial topic. Desegregation allows people from different racial backgrounds to interact socially. It traditionally meant removing formal legal barriers, or simply placing people of different races in proximity to each other. Efforts were often limited to moving and mixing racial populations to end racial isolation. When looking at educational backgrounds, the positive effects of school desegregation appeared to be far reaching, and included life long social integration and occupational attainment. For example, Wood and Sonleitner (1996) explored white students' interracial contact as children and their current attitudes towards black people in their retrospective study. It was found that childhood interracial contact significantly decreased negative stereotyping and prejudice towards black people, suggesting that appropriate school desegregation was effective in encouraging positive attitudes. However, Schofield (1995) noted that improving inter-group contact through desegregation was expected to take time, because of the fact that racial groups were segregated for a long time. This implied that integrating people from different backgrounds together was not be enough in ensuring contact or positive social outcomes, and that there were many underlying factors which make people reluctant to interact.

Nevertheless, racial segregation persists in South Africa, seemingly affecting racial relations and leading to prejudice. In the post-apartheid, democratic South Africa, contact with other racial groups is almost unavoidable; however people seem to avoid interacting with each other, or have contact that is of a superficial nature with members of the out-group. Triandis and Vassiliou (1966) distinguished between minimum, medium and maximum contact. Minimum contact occurred when a person had no contact with people who belonged to another cultural group, whereas medium contact involved an individual having a few interactions with people from another cultural group on frequent occasions such as sports events. When contact with members from other cultures was relative to the amount of regular personal interaction that a person had with such members, the contact was classified as maximum contact.

However, Amir (1969) argued that in order for contact to occur, there had to be an opportunity for it. Hence, the first question when looking at contact is whether there is an opportunity for it and whether the setting provides the necessary conditions for favourable contact. According to Shelton and Richeson (2005) people have to decide whether to approach or avoid inter-group contact when faced with these opportunities. Brewer and Miller (1998) as well as Stephan (1985) are some of the authors who suggested situational and personality factors that helped determine which plan of action was taken. For example, one assumption was that contact between young people of different races would occur when they were brought together in the same educational environment. Such contact must however be facilitated and be regular to promote inter-group harmony (Dixon & Reicher, 1997). The primary challenge was to create climates that did not inhibit or discourage interaction. According to the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954) inter-group contact alone was not enough to lead to positive inter-group relations between members of different racial and ethnic groups. Much depended upon the nature of the contact that takes place (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1971).

2.2 CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

As discussed in the previous chapter, this study focuses on inter-group relations and explores the reasons behind the apparent lack of contact in a desegregated setting such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). There are various social psychological theories on inter-racial relations, such as the Social Identity theory which posits that much of a person's identity is informed by the groups that he or she belongs to, as well as by the positive or negative perceptions of those groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Accordingly, people are strongly motivated to develop a positive social identity which results in the maintenance of positive attitudes towards their own group and prejudice against the out-group. Social psychological research on segregation has however mainly worked within the theoretical framework of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954).

The contact hypothesis will form the theoretical framework for the current study as it has become the most influential approach for understanding inter-group relations. The hypothesis underlies a number of social policies such as the desegregation of the United States public schools (Patchen, 1982; Schofield & Sagar, 1977; Stephan, 1978). According to this hypothesis, the mutual isolation of different groups encourages the development of negative attitudes and stereotypes which increase the probability of intergroup conflict. Conversely, the contact hypothesis suggests that regular inter-group contact between members of different racial and ethnical groups will result in a reduction of inter-group prejudice or conflict, provided it occurs under optimal conditions (Dixon, 2001; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). These conditions include equal status within the contact situation, cooperation of the groups in pursuit of a common goal and institutional support for contact (Allport, 1954):

2.2.1 Equal Status

As a nation, South Africans fought apartheid and faced many challenges to establish the current democracy with its values. For example, during the apartheid era, equal status

was not necessarily accepted by all the individuals within an inter-group situation (Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991). The authors found in their study with white and black primary school learners in a primary school that the female learners exhibited an attitude improvement after a situation of equal status contact. However, the male learners did not exhibit an attitude improvement, thus demonstrating that equal status was not necessarily accepted by all the individuals within an inter-group situation.

However, South African people are now fortunate to live in a democracy, and more specifically, in a society that upholds democratic ideals. For example, black people can now move into previously white suburbs; schools and universities are desegregated which give all learners an equal opportunity to education. Furthermore, this movement towards equal opportunity has advanced even further as public and private schools as well as universities have increased financial support for economically disadvantaged learners. It seems that as a society, South Africa is moving towards a model of equality for one and all, and yet, disparities remain. Race continues to be inextricably linked to socio-economic status and education level, with certain racial and ethnic groups, reaping more societal advantages on average than others. In addition, the different racial groups have many cultural differences between them, and do not seem equal in terms of wealth, opportunities and resources; hence many neighbourhoods and townships are still segregated, limiting the amount of inter-racial contact to superficial and irregular contact (Finchilescu, 2005). Allport (1954) proposed that it was crucial for individuals to expect and perceive equal status between each other in the contact situation. Equal group status within the situation was necessary with both groups expecting and perceiving equal status in the contact situation (Cook, 1985; Robinson & Preston, 1976). Interestingly, white people often perceived contact as being equal, in contrast to black people, who did not perceive it as such (Cook, 1985; Robinson & Preston, 1976).

Holtman (2002) proposed that members of different groups had to be on the same level of status when they entered the contact situation, referred to as the social structure of status in the broader community. However, Brewer and Miller (1984) asserted that equal status

between members at the structural level did not correspond to equal status at the psychological level. This suggested that the extent to which pre-existing status differences between groups carried over into new situations actually hindered interaction. Unequal group status within contact situations also reinforced the prejudiced views held by individuals towards the out-group members (Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991). Cohen (1976) focused on the meaning of equal status and developed a theory of status characteristics and expectations states that were applied to inter-racial contact. The author proposed that the status order in a society engendered expectations about the competence of certain groups of people which were accepted by all groups. Apparently, when members of these different groups interacted, their expectations about competence led to dominance and actual superior performance by the higher ranked groups.

However, as stated above, South Africa remains a decidedly unequal society and was ranked as the fourth most unequal nation-state in the world in the 1990's (Morse, 2004). It is evident that economic inequalities are deeply racialised, with the spatial distribution of housing remaining relatively unchanged other than in limited areas. In order to ensure the truly equal status environment that was critical according to the contact theory, the biased expectations of both black and white people must be addressed in order to promote acceptance, and help them realize that they were more similar regarding their beliefs and perceptions than they previously thought (Cohen, 1975).

2.2.2 Common goal

Allport (1954) asserted that an active, goal-oriented effort was required to reduce prejudice through contact. This implies that it is necessary for groups to work together towards the same goal in order to promote inter-group interaction. For example, when individuals shared common tasks, goals, and rewards with culturally diverse peers, positive feelings emerged (Byrnes, 1988). Patchen (1982) also reported that members of different groups became more amicable because they worked on a common goal. However, it was important to promote contact that revealed enough detail about members

of the out-group in order to encourage their perception as individuals rather than as stereotyped group members (Cook, 1978).

According to Brewer & Miller (1984) this depended on whether the focus of the interaction was task or interpersonally oriented, because group members in task oriented settings evaluated fellow group members based on task requirements and performance. This unfortunately narrowed the range of information that was attended to as individual differences were ignored and the opportunity to learn anything about group members other than their salient category identity was limited. Furthermore, it was important that the achievement of common goals was an inter-dependent effort without any inter-group competition (Bettencourt, Brewer, Rogers-Croak & Miller, 1992). In the old South Africa, apartheid laws prevented black people from competing with white people for various things such as jobs and in the process reified competition as inevitable between the racial groups (Finchilescu, 2005). The author postulated that the post-apartheid affirmative action policies continue to maintain this focus on competition.

2.2.3 Inter-group Cooperation

Inter-group cooperation, a form of collaboration, was described as "working together to accomplish shared goals" (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, p.2). Cook (1985) suggested that contact involving cooperation in the achievement of a common goal had more favourable outcomes than contact without such cooperation. When members from different groups co-operated with each other in order to attain common goals they tended to unlearn negative stereotypes about each other (Sherif, 1966). One such setting where people worked towards a common goal was the school or educational setting. For Pettigrew (1998), inter-group cooperation in schools provided the strongest evidence, and he related this to Aronson's jigsaw classroom technique. This technique structured the classroom so that the learners strived cooperatively for a common goal, leading to positive results for a variety of learners (Pettigrew, 1998). However, simply putting black and white students in groups and letting them interact was not enough to achieve positive outcomes.

At least three conditions were to prevail for successful cooperation. People had to see themselves as positively interdependent in order to take a personal responsibility for working together in achieving group goals; they had to engage in considerable face-to-face interaction in which they helped each other, shared resources and promoted a feeling of safety to reduce anxiety of all the members. For the first two conditions to prevail, effective group process skills were deemed necessary.

2.2.4 Institutional Support

According to Allport (1954) inter-group contact was more willingly accepted by groups and with more positive effect if there was increased social support from the authorities involved. This was especially important because the support from the authorities established norms of acceptance in the broader community and also promoted norms for tolerance (Mynhardt & Du Toit, 1991; Pettigrew, 1998). Still, perceptions of racial climates were likely to differ for groups. For example, a perceived lack of institutional support for diversity and racial equality may have detrimental effects to students' learning. In South Africa, Schrieff et al (2005) emphasized the importance of the social climate as a factor determining the outcome of inter-group contact, and that it did not matter if there was an opportunity for contact if the social climate was not supportive. "The social climate influenced whether positive contact between members of the two groups affect future relations positively, because it affects the reception of such contact by peers, socially. Depending on whether the social climate is supportive or not, this will either encourage or inhibit inter-group contact, respectively" (Schrieff et al., 2005, p.14).

The above conditions were necessary for inter-group contact but it was important that the contact situation also had "friendship potential" (Pettigrew, 1998). The author argued that the contact hypothesis did not address process and had been overburdened with too many facilitating but not essential conditions. For example, the hypothesis did not predict how and why the positive effects of contact occurred. Pettigrew (1998) further asserted that inter-group friendship had strong positive effects because it entailed learning

about the out-group, changing behaviour, generating affective ties and in-group reappraisal. What was more; the hypothesis also did not specify how the effects generalized to other situations or the out-group. The contact was often not generalized from one member of the out-group to the out-group as a whole (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hewstone & Cairns, 2001; Pettigrew, 1998). An individual's attitudes changed in relation to the specific members of another racial group that they had contact with, but this change did not often generalize to that individual's attitudes towards the group as a whole (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). For example, Van Dyk (1990) demonstrated that white South African housewives were generally positive towards their black domestic workers; however their attitudes did not generalize to black people in general.

Despite this, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) argued that contact did lead to reduced prejudice, especially when the conditions under which the contact occurred, promoted the development of cross-group friendship. In South Africa, Spangenberg and Nel (1983) also found a link between cross-race friendships and more positive racial attitudes. This suggests that inter-group mixing can sometimes improve racial attitudes, as Luiz and Krige (1981) also showed in their study. The authors did a study with coloured and white girls in a contact situation. The racial attitudes of the white girls were measured before and after the contact, and then compared with the attitudes of a control group which did not have inter-racial contact. The study concluded that the racial attitudes of the white girls improved after the inter-group contact and were more positive than the attitudes of the girls in the control group. Similarly, in another study, inter-racial contact was found to have a positive effect on racial attitudes. Finchilescu (1988) explored the effect of interracial contact among nurses at private hospitals. One hospital trained white and indian nurses, the other trained black and indian nurses. In the other two hospitals which were the "non-contact" hospitals, white and black nurses were trained respectively. The study indicated that the interracial contact had a positive effect on the attitudes of the white nurses towards the indian nurses, but interestingly, the black and indian nurses in the other contact hospital showed ethnocentric racial attitudes.

Pettigrew (1998) proposed three strategies to enhance generalization to the out-group, namely decategorization, which created new forms of physical closeness which did not exist previously; salient group categorization, and re-categorization. The author argued that contact had to reduce inter-group anxiety and inter-group bias, hopefully generalizing these positive attitudes to out groups that were not involved in the contact situation, and ultimately transforming limitations or boundaries as new closeness was experienced by the self and members of the out-group. Boundaries enabled individuals to open themselves up or close themselves for contact. This influenced the contextual salience of social categories, implying that decategorization was not likely to occur in environments where group differences remain veiled.

For example, in a study investigating the impact of inter-group contact and boundary process in a newly desegregated town in South Africa, white residents interpreted their daily encounters with "Black squatters" as a boundary threat that ultimately warranted the reinstallation of wire fencing (Dixon and Reicher, 1997). This functioned as a physical barrier between the groups, evident even today in South Africa where both white and black people maintained their boundaries and mixed only with their own kind. As Dixon and Durrheim (2003) argued there were many obstacles to achieving positive contact in everyday settings. For example, socio-economic status, tendencies to associate primarily with members of one's own group, perception of out-group members as "invaders" and differences between groups in language, religion and perceived status all acted as obstacles to interracial contact (Amir, 1969; Wolf, 1957, 1960). In the same way, the amount of contact people perceived as available, the ways in which they made use of the opportunities available for inter-group contact and people's previous environments, for example, the type of schools attended (whether segregated or integrated) and whether they had stereotypical views of people from other racial groups served as reasons why people did not mix (Steele, Choi, & Ambady, 2001). What was more, people experienced responses that were related to avoidance such as "anxiety" and "behavioural avoidance" regarding interracial contact and actively avoided such interactions (Plant & Butz, 2006; Plant & Devine, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Nevertheless, in this

newly integrated and diverse South African society, these interactions are at times difficult to avoid, even if an individual wishes to have minimum or medium contact with out-group members. But as evident from the studies alluded to earlier, it seems obvious that there is much racial segregation in South Africa; in public spaces, residential suburbs and at universities, indicating that segregation is continuously manifesting along racial lines. Next, an exploration of the reasons why this was happening follows.

2.3 INTER-GROUP ANXIETY

In examining the reasons why people mixed or did not mix inter-racially, anxiety was theorized to be one of the important factors in determining how people respond in such interactions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). The authors defined inter-group anxiety as the anxiety that individuals experienced when they had contact with members of an out-group. This anxiety caused people to anticipate and mirror negative responses from the out-group such as rejection. The inter-group relations theory asserted that "the greater the perceived dissimilarity, the greater the subjective inter-group distance" (Buttny, 1999, p.248). Members of the out-group were perceived as too different to motivate the in-group members to communicate with them. These perceived differences then resulted in anxiety and increased levels of uncertainty, leading individuals to avoid contact with out-group members

In addition, a lack of knowledge and misperception about the out-group also led to inter-group anxiety and hence, fostered negative out-group attitudes and an increase in out-group derogation. However, Hewstone and Brown (1986) emphasized that anxiety itself was caused by other factors rather than only lack of knowledge and misperception about the out-group. For example, social identity was another important factor affecting inter-group contact. In countries experiencing ethno-political conflict, inter-group contact was hindered through social norms, which were further enforced by social exclusion or even through violent means. Hence, people identifying strongly with their in-group were more

inclined to follow the prevailing group norms in an attempt to preserve their social identities.

Wright, Aron, McLauglin-Volpe and Ropp (1997) proposed that just the knowledge that a fellow in-group member has a close relationship with a member of the out-group promoted more positive attitudes and reduced inter-group anxiety. In addition it led to the formation of close friendships as Hewstone (1997) found in his study, stating that it seemed to be the most effective way of reducing prejudice. He also proposed that group salience assisted in decreasing anxiety by promoting contact that involved personal exchange within a close relationship where all the participants involved were aware that they belong to different groups. However, Islam and Hewstone (1993) argued that this was not to be done in the initial stage of contact, especially when inter-group relations were very negative. The assessment of anxiety was thus imperative in order to know how an individual reacted to inter-group contact with out-group members (Vorauer, Main & Connell, 1998). The authors suggested that insecurity regarding appropriate behaviour and fear of negative evaluation were obvious indications of inter-group anxiety which has negative consequences. As Plant (2004) asserted, inter-group anxiety involved feelings of "tension" and "distress" which resulted when an individual interacted with a person from a different racial group, leading to the avoidance of contact.

According to a model of social anxiety by Schlenker and Leary (1982), social anxiety occurred when people were motivated to make a particular impression but had negative expectancies regarding the outcome of such contact. The negative outcome expectancies resulted if people believed that they did not have the necessary skills to make the desired impression or expected that their efforts would be received negatively by others. These expectancies then resulted in anxiety in interpersonal relations. Suport for the above model of social anxiety came from two studies that were presented by Plant and Devine (2003). The authors proposed a model of inter-racial interactions that looked into the antecedents of "avoidance related responses" to interracial contact, as well as the "implications of inter-racial anxiety". According to them, people's expectations to make

a desired impression in inter-racial interactions influenced the level of anxiety that they experience and their avoidance of inter-racial interactions.

The first study looked at the responses that white people reported regarding interactions with black people, finding that the participants' level of inter-racial anxiety was associated with their desire to avoid contact with black people. In their second study, the authors found that white people who reported high levels of anxiety about mixing with a black person were unlikely to return for the interaction the next week than those who were less anxious. The results from these studies suggested that inter-group anxiety did influence inter-racial mixing, and that people who had negative expectations about the possible outcomes of inter-racial mixing were more anxious about such interactions, ultimately choosing not to mix at all (Plant & Devine, 2003). This implied that negative outcome expectancies were related to heightened inter-group anxiety, leading to the avoidance of contact and even hostile reactions to the out-group.

Plant (2004) also suggested that anxiety created "negative expectancies" about the possible outcomes of such inter-group contact. The author suggested that people had concerns about being perceived as "prejudiced" by out-group members. Moreover, people did not mix with others when they expected the outcome of such inter-racial mixing to be unpleasant or negative. People's expectations regarding such negative consequences were derived partly from their past experience with out-group members. In addition, people with negative expectations regarding inter-racial mixing also experienced heightened anxiety which was associated with "flight" or "avoidance" responses and an increased desire to avoid inter-racial interactions (Plant & Butz, 2006). The authors demonstrated that if people had limited positive experiences with members of the out-group, this resulted in inter-group anxiety. According to Finchilescu, Tredoux, Mynhardt, Pillay and Muianga (2007) these outcome expectancies largely measured the person's fear of being seen as biased by members of another racial group, hence constituting a meta-stereotype. These authors further proposed that inter-group anxiety was a central factor in understanding the continuing informal segregation in South Africa.

The anxiety that people experienced during a contact situation was seen to lead them to "scripts" of behaviour that they were familiar with (Finchilescu, et al., 2007). The authors asserted that the "scholastic under-performance" by minority group members was highlighted in research on "stereotype threat" and was a product of inter-group anxiety. Stereotype fear was defined as "the fear of confirming or being judged by a negative societal stereotype" (Steele & Aronson, 2000, p.369 in Finchilescu, et al., 2007). Steele and Aronson (2000) found in their study with American college students that the students' intellectual functioning was affected by "stereotype threat". In addition, some anxiety factors, namely "rejection sensitivity" comprised the anxiety and fears about how one was treated or perceived by members of other racial groups (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Tropp, 2003).

The situational factors under which members of different groups interacted (such as the status of each group, roles of each group, the nature and level of interdependence required and how the contact is organized) also had an impact on and contributed to anxiety in the groups (Shrieff et al., 2005). According to Stephan and Stephan (1985) prior inter-group relations, inter-group cognitions and situational factors are antecedent factors that lead to anxiety. The authors argued that the amount and nature of contact that was experienced by the groups was crucial. For example, groups that were unstructured without clear role expectations and a history of conflict were more likely to experience higher anxiety. Anxiety would also be higher if group members in a contact situation were competing with each other without any cooperation or interdependence and had unequal status. Furthermore, negative stereotypes and lack of knowledge regarding the culture of the out-group were some of the factors that heightened anxiety. Finchilescu et al (2007) discussed the antecedent factors which were explained by Stephan and Stephan's (1985, 2000) model with reference to South Africa. The model lined anxiety to the avoidance of contact and provided a useful framework for understanding the reluctance of many people in South Africa to mix with members of other racial groups. Meta-stereotypes were also introduced as another antecedent factor which was vital in

understanding the continuing racial segregation in South Africa (Finchilescu, et al., 2007).

2.4 META-STEREOTYPES

Research by social psychologists showed that meta-stereotypes were a reality for individuals who engaged in inter-group contact (Oldenhuis, 2007). People often thought about the characteristics of a person whom they were meeting for the first time (Park & Flink, 1989; Wigboldus, Dijkserhuis, & Van Knippenberg, 2003). According to Baumeister (1982) and Leary and Downs (1995), one of the main social informational goals that people had, was figuring out what other people thought of them. As Sheldon and Johnson (1993) showed in their study, people thought a lot about how they were perceived by others. Oldenhuis (2007) refers to "meta-perceptions" as the beliefs concerning how one was viewed by others. According to Curtis and Miller (1986) attitudes and behaviour were heavily shaped by meta-perceptions, not only in interpersonal relations, but also in inter-group relations. Meta-stereotypes thus refer to the beliefs regarding the particular stereotypes that an out-group holds about the in-group (Sigelman & Tuch, 1997; Vorauer, Main & O'Connell, 1998). Meta-stereotypes are a specialized form of meta-perceptions and carry a range of "emotional" and "behavioural" consequences (Finchilescu, et al., 2005). The authors described the experience of being stereotyped as seldom pleasant, particularly when the stereotype content was thought to be negative. The individual first experiences a feeling of being "de-individualised" and "subsumed" within a large category where various negative traits are attributed to the self without an opportunity to object or deny their truth. This experience is considered to further lower the individual's self-esteem, leading to heightened anxiety during actual or anticipated inter-racial contact. Contact is then avoided if possible.

Finchilescu (2005) argued that attitudes towards the out-group were likely to be affected, and generally led to the "reciprocal response". However, the accuracy of meta-

stereotypes referred to the comparison of the meta-stereotypes with the actual stereotypes that the out-group held; especially as research has found much congruence (Finchilescu, 2004; Sigelman & Tuch, 1997). The authors found that many of the traits and behaviours that appeared in the meta-stereotyped were not found in the stereotypes that the out-group provided for the group in question. However, "groups tended to think that the out-groups were more negative towards them than was actually the case" (Krueger, 1996 in Finchilescu, 2005, p.466). Meta-stereotypes were also activated rather quickly in a contact situation. For example, Vorauer, Hunter, Main and Roy (2000) demonstrated that white Canadians who were instructed to imagine themselves seated next to an Aboriginal Canadian already showed activation of meta-stereotypes. Moreover, if such perceptions were conflicting with their self-concept, their contact with that person was dramatically affected (Vorauer, et al., 1998). The authors found that the stronger the perceived meta-stereotype, the more negatively the anticipated contact was viewed.

However, Sigelman and Tuch (1997) hypothesized that black people who had more sustained contact with white people, had less negative meta-stereotypes than those who had little interaction with whites. This was consistent with the contact hypothesis which argued that increased interracial contact led to a reduction in racial stereotypes, resulting in improved inter-group relations. However, contrary to the contact hypothesis, Sigelman and Tuch (1997) found that black people who reported the most contact with white people also had the most negative meta-stereotypes.

Finchilescu et al (2007) argued that meta-stereotypes and anxiety play a role in understanding the persistence of racial segregation in South Africa. Meta-stereotypes refer to "the stereotypes that members of a group believed that members of an out-group held of them and carried a range of emotional and behavioural consequences" (Finchilescu, et al. 2007, p. 465). They were activated not only when there was actual contact, but even when contact was just anticipated, especially if there was an evaluative dimension involved. For example, Finchilescu, Hunt, Mankge, and Nunez (2002) explored the anxiety experienced by black and white students in an alleged contact

situation in an internet chat room and found that the most anxiety was displayed by low-prejudice white students, who believed that black people held negative stereotypes of white people. Oldenhuis (2007) revealed that meta-stereotypes were activated when people expected to be evaluated by out-group members. The author argued that high prejudice people but not low prejudice people were inclined to act in line with an activated negative meta-stereotype. The experience of being stereotyped by other individuals raised anxiety in contact situations and resulted in avoidance of members of the out-group.

Oldenhuis (2007) also argued that white people in South Africa felt guilty with respect to black people as a result of what happened during the apartheid era. Recent research revealed that white people in South Africa showed a negative relation between prejudice and meta-prejudice with respect to black people in South Africa (Gordijn, Brix, Wijnants, Koomen, Finchilescu, 2006 as cited in Oldenhuis, 2007). The black people however, did not show a similar pattern with respect to the whites in South Africa. Also, Oldenhuis, Gordijn and Otten (2007b) demonstrated that the activation of negative meta-stereotypes did not always lead to assimilation in "behavioural expression". The author explained that people with a high level of prejudice who disliked the particular out-group assimilated with a negative meta-stereotype. However, the activation of positive meta-stereotypes was considered to sometimes also lead to assimilation in behavioural expressions. Hence, people with a low level of prejudice who liked the particular out-group acted in line with a positive meta-stereotype. A discussion of prejudice follows next as it is evident from the above discussions that it plays a role in racial segregation as prejudiced people seem to avoid contact.

2.5 PREJUDICE

Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) considered prejudice as one of the causes for the avoidance of contact. Prejudice is defined as " a hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a